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Discoveries in Greek Mythology

A GREAT MANY GREEK MYTHS OR PSEUDO-MYTHS hide their ritual or historical sense under a mask of seeming childishness, and it was only when I began classifying them in a dictionary that I realized how easy it is to be fooled. Take for instance the stories of Narcissus and Hyacinthus.

Narcissus was a Thespian, the son of the blue nymph Leiriope, whom the River-god Cephissus had once encircled with the windings of his streams, and ravished. The seer Teiresias told Leiriope, the first person ever to consult him: 'Narcissus will live to a ripe old age, provided that he never knows himself.' Anyone might excusably have fallen in love with Narcissus, even as a child, and when he reached the age of sixteen, his path was strewn with heartlessly rejected lovers of both sexes; for he had a stubborn pride in his own beauty.

Among these lovers was the nymph Echo, who could no longer use her voice, except in foolish repetition of another's shout: a punishment for having kept Hera entertained with long stories while Zeus's concubines, the mountain nymphs, evaded her jealous eye and made good their escape. One day, when Narcissus went out to net stags, Echo stealthily followed him through the pathless forest, longing to address him, but unable to speak first. After a while Narcissus, finding that he had strayed from his companions, shouted: 'Is anyone here?'

'Here!' Echo answered; which surprised Narcissus, since no one was in sight.

'Come!'

'Come!'

'Why do you avoid me?'

'Why do you avoid me?'

'Let us come together here!'

'Let us come together here!' repeated Echo, and joyfully rushed from her hiding place to embrace Narcissus. Yet he shook her off roughly, and ran away. 'I will die before you ever lie with me!' he cried.

'Lie with me!' Echo pleaded.

But Narcissus had gone, and she spent the rest of her life in lonely

glens, pining away for love and mortification, until only her voice remained.¹

One day Narcissus sent a sword to Ameinius, his most insistent suitor, after whom the River Ameinius is named; it is a tributary of the River Helisson, which flows into the Alpheius. Ameinius killed himself on Narcissus's threshold, calling on the gods to avenge his death.

Artemis heard the plea, and made Narcissus fall in love, though denying him love's consummation. At Donacon in Thespia he came upon a spring, clear as silver, and never yet disturbed by cattle, birds, wild beasts, or even by branches dropping off the trees that shaded it; and as he cast himself down, exhausted, on the grassy verge to slake his thirst, he fell in love with his reflection. At first he tried to embrace and kiss the beautiful boy who confronted him, but presently recognized himself, and lay gazing enraptured into the pool, hour after hour. How could he endure both to possess and yet not to possess? Grief was destroying him, yet he rejoiced in his torments; knowing at least that his other self would remain true to him, whatever happened.

Echo, although she had not forgiven Narcissus, grieved with him; she sympathetically echoed 'Alas! Alas!' as he plunged a dagger in his breast, and the final 'Ah, youth, beloved in vain, fare well!' as he expired. His blood soaked the earth, and up sprang the white narcissus flower with its red corollary, from which an unguent balm is now distilled at Chaeronea. This is recommended for affections of the ears (though apt to give headaches), also as a vulnerary, and for the cure of frost-bite.²

There was also the case of the beautiful youth Hyacinthus, a Spartan prince, with whom not only the poet Thamyris fell in love—the first man who ever wooed one of his own sex—but Apollo himself, the first god to do so. Apollo did not find Thamyris a serious rival; having overheard his boast that he could surpass the Muses in song, he maliciously reported it to them, and they at once robbed Thamyris of his sight, his voice, and his memory for harping. But the West Wind had also taken a fancy to Hyacinthus, and became insanely jealous of Apollo, who was one day teaching the boy how to hurl a discus, when the West Wind caught it in mid-air, dashed it against Hyacinthus's skull, and killed him. From his blood sprang the hyacinth flower, on which his initial letters are still to be traced.³

The 'narcissus' used in the ancient wreath of Demeter and

¹Ovid: *Metamorphoses* iii. 341-401.

²Pausanias: viii. 29. 4 and ix. 31. 6; Ovid: *Metamorphoses* 402-510; Conon: *Narrations* 24; Pliny: *Natural History* xxi. 75.

³Homer: *Iliad* ii. 595-600; Lucian: *Dialogues of the Gods* 14; Apollodorus: i. 3. 3; Pausanias: iii. 1. 3.

Persephone,⁴ and also called *leirion*, was the three-petalled fleur-de-lys, or iris: sacred to the Triple-goddess, and worn as a chaplet when the Three Solemn Ones, or Furies, were being placated. It flowers in late autumn, shortly before the 'poet's narcissus', which is perhaps why Leiriope has been described as Narcissus's mother. This fanciful moral tale—incidentally accounting for the medicinal properties of narcissus-oil, a well-known *narcotic*, as the first syllable of 'Narcissus' implies—may have been deduced from a sacred picture painted on some temple wall which showed the despairing Alcmaeon, or Orestes, lying crowned with lilies, beside a pool in which he has vainly tried to purify himself after murdering his mother; the Furies having refused to be placated. Echo, in this icon, would represent the mocking ghost of his mother, and Ameinius his murdered father.

But *-issus*, like *-inthus*, is a Cretan termination, and both Narcissus and Hyacinthus seem to have been names for the Cretan Spring-flower hero whose death the Goddess bewails on a gold ring from the Mycenaean Acropolis; elsewhere he is called Antheus, a surname of Dionysus. This name was given to several other unfortunate princes, cut down in the flower of their lives, among them a son of Poseidon, killed and flayed by Cleomenes, and Antheus of Halicarnassus, thrown down a well by Cleobis. Moreover, the lily was the royal emblem of the Cnossian kings. In a painted relief found among the Palace ruins he walks sceptered through a lily-meadow, wearing a crown and necklace of fleur-de-lys.

The myth of Hyacinthus seems at first sight no more than a sentimental fable told to account for the Greek hyacinth, or blue larkspur, *hyacinthos grapta*, which has marks on the base of its petals resembling the early Greek letters *AI-AI*, or 'Alas!'. But it concerns the Cretan Spring-flower hero, Hyacinthus, also called Narcissus, whose worship was introduced into Mycenaean Greece, and who named the late summer month of Hyacinthius in Crete, Rhodes, Cos, Thera and Laconia. Dorian Apollo usurped Hyacinthus's name at Tarentum where he had a hero tomb;⁵ and at Amyclae, a Mycenaean city, another 'tomb of Hyacinthus' became the foundation of Apollo's throne. Apollo was an immortal

⁴Sophocles: *Oedipus at Colonus* 682-684.

⁵Polybius: viii. 30.

by this time, Hyacinthus reigned only for a season: his death by a discus recalls that of his nephew Acrisius. The discus, doubtless winged in the sacred picture on which the story is based, represented the Sun. When its power declined, the flower-hero was sacrificed. The homosexual element in both myths does not rule out a Cretan origin, since Minos is credited by Stephanus of Byzantium and Plato with 'the wicked Cretan invention of Sodomy'.

The myth of Linus, another unfortunate prince, has been misread by Sir James Frazer in his *Golden Bough*:

The child Linus of Argos must be distinguished from Linus, the son of Ismenius, whom Heracles killed with a lyre. According to the Argives, Psamathe, the daughter of Crotopus, bore the child Linus to Apollo and, fearing her father's wrath, exposed him on a mountain. He was found and reared by shepherds, but afterwards torn in pieces by Crotopus's mastiffs. Since Psamathe could not disguise her grief, Crotopus soon guessed that she was Linus's mother, and condemned her to death. Apollo punished the city of Argos for this double crime by sending a sort of Harpy named Poene, who snatched young children from their parents until one Coroeus took it upon himself to destroy her. A plague then descended on the city and, when it showed no sign of abating, the Argives consulted the Delphic Oracle, which advised them to propitiate Psamathe and Linus. Accordingly they offered sacrifices to their ghosts, the women and maidens chanting dirges, still called *linoi*; and since Linus had been reared among lambs, named the festival *arnis*, and the month in which it was held *arneios*. The plague still raging, at last Coroeus went to Delphi and confessed to Poene's murder. The Pythoness would not let him return to Argos, but said: 'Carry my tripod hence, and build a temple to Apollo wherever it falls from your hands!' This happened to him on Mount Geraneia, where he founded first the temple and then the city of Tripodisci, and took up residence there. His tomb is shown in the market place at Megara; surmounted by a group of statuary, which depicts Poene's murder—the most ancient sculptures of that kind still surviving in Greece.⁶ The second Linus is sometimes called Oetolinus, and harpists mourn him at banquets.⁷

A third Linus likewise lies buried at Argos: he was the poet whom some describe as a son of Oeagrus and the Muse Calliope—thus making

⁶Pausanias: i. 43. 7 and ii. 19. 7; Conon: *Narrations* 19; Athenaeus: iii. p. 99.

⁷Sappho, quoted by Pausanias: ix. 29. 3; Homer: *Iliad* xviii. 569-570; Hesiod, quoted by Diogenes Laertius: viii. 1. 25.

him Orpheus's brother. Others call him the son of Apollo and the Muse Urania, or Arethusa, a daughter of Poseidon; or of Hermes and Urania; others, again, of Amphimarus, Poseidon's son, and Urania; still others, of Magnes and the Muse Clio.⁸ Linus was the greatest musician who ever appeared among mankind, and jealous Apollo killed him. He had composed ballads in honour of Dionysus and other ancient heroes, afterwards recording them in Pelasgian letters; also an epic of the Creation. Linus, in fact, invented rhythm and melody, was universally wise, and taught both Thamyris and Orpheus.⁹

The lament for Linus spread all over the world and is the theme, for instance, of the Egyptian *Song of Maneros*. On Mount Helicon, as one approaches the Muses' grove, Linus's portrait is carved in the wall of a small grotto, where annual sacrifices to him precede those offered to the Muses. It is claimed that he lies buried at Thebes, and that Philip, father of Alexander the Great, after defeating the Greeks at Chaeronea, removed his bones to Macedonia, in accordance with a dream; but later dreamed again, and sent them back.¹⁰

Pausanias connects the myth of the Child Linus with that of Maneros, the Egyptian Corn-spirit, for whom dirges were chanted at harvest time, and Frazer therefore identifies these two; but Linus seems to have been the spirit of the flax-plant (*linos*), sown in Spring and harvested in Summer. He had Psamathe for mother because, according to Pliny,¹¹ 'they sowed flax in *sandy* soil'. His grandfather, and murderer, was Crotopus because—again according to Pliny—the yellowing flax-stalks, after having been plucked out by the roots, and hung up in the open air, were bruised with the 'pounding feet' of tow-mallets. But Apollo, whose priests wore linen, and who was patron of all Greek music, fathered him. Linus's destruction by dogs evidently refers to the maceration of the flax-stems with iron hatchels, a process which Pliny describes in the same passage. Frazer suggests, without supporting evidence, that Linus is a Greek mishearing of the Phoenician *ai lanu*, 'woe upon us'. Oetolinus means 'doomed Linus'.

The myth has, however, been reduced to the familiar pastoral pattern of the child exposed for fear of a jealous grandfather and reared by shepherds; which suggest that the linen industry in

⁸Apollodorus: i. 3. 2; Hyginus: *Fabula* 161; *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* 314; Diogenes Laertius: *Prooemium* 3; Pausanias: ix. 29. 3; Tzetzes: *On Lycophron* 831.

⁹Diodorus Siculus: iii. 67; Diogenes Laertius: *loc. cit.*; Hesiod, quoted by Clement of Alexandria: *Stromateis* i. p. 121.

¹⁰Pausanias: *loc. cit.*

¹¹*Natural History* xix. 2.

Argolis died out, owing to the Dorian invasion, or Egyptian underselling, or both, and was replaced by a woollen industry; yet the annual dirges for the Child Linus continued to be chanted. The flax industry is likely to have been established by the Cretans who civilized Argolis; the Greek word for flax-rope is *merinthos*, another *-inthos* word.

Coroebus, when he killed Poene ('punishment'), probably forbade child sacrifices at the Linus Festival, and substituted lambs, renaming the month 'Lamb Month'; he has been identified with an Elean of the same name who won the foot race at the First Olympiad (776 B.C.). Tripodiscus seems to have no connexion with tripods, but to be derived from *tripodizein*, 'to fetter thrice'.

Since the flax-harvest was the occasion of plaintive dirges and rhythmic pounding, and since at midsummer—to judge from the Swiss and Suabian examples quoted by Frazer—young people leaped around a bonfire to make the flax grow tall, another mystical Linus was presumed: one who attained manhood and became a famous musician, the inventor of rhythm and melody. This Linus had a Muse for mother, and for father, Arcadian Hermes, or Thracian Oeagrius, or Magnes, the eponymous ancestor of the Magnesians; he was, in fact, not a Hellene, but guardian of the pre-Hellenic Pelasgian culture, which included the tree-alphabet and Creation lore. Apollo, who tolerated no rivals in music—as he had shown in the case of Marsyas, whom he flayed for presuming to compete with him, pipe against lyre—is said to have killed Linus off-hand; but Apollo adopted, rather than murdered him. Later, his death was more appropriately laid at the door of Heracles, patron of the uncivilized Dorians who invaded Greece in the eleventh century B.C.

Linus is called Orpheus's brother because of a similarity in their fate: Orpheus was torn in pieces by wild women when he ascended Mount Pangaeum to worship the rising sun. In the Austrian Alps (I am informed by Margarita Schön-Wels) men are not admitted to the flax-harvest, or to the process of drying, beating and macerating, or to the spinning-rooms. The ruling spirit is the *Harpatsch*: a terrifying hag, with sooty hands and face. Any man who meets her accidentally, is embraced, forced to dance, sexually assaulted, and smeared with soot. Moreover, the women who beat the flax, called *Bechlerinnen*, chase and sur-

round any stranger who blunders into their midst. They throw him down, step over him, tie his hands and feet, wrap him in tow, scour his face and hands with prickly flax-waste, rub him against the rough bark of a felled tree, and finally roll him downhill. Near Feldkirch, they only make the trespasser lie on the ground and step over him; but elsewhere they open his trouser-flies and stuff them with flax-waste, which is so painful that he has to escape bare-legged. Near Salzburg, the Bechlerinnen untrouser the trespasser themselves, and threaten to castrate him; after his flight, they purify the place by burning twigs and clashing sickles together.

Little is known of what goes on in the spinning-rooms, the women being so secretive; except that they chant a dirge called the *Flachses Qual* ('Flax's Torment'), or *Leinen Klage* ('Linen Complaint'). It seems likely, then, that at the flax-harvest in Argolis women used to catch, sexually assault, and dismember a man who represented the flax-spirit; but since this was also the fate of Orpheus, who protested against human sacrifice and sexual orgies, Linus is described as his brother. The *Harpatsch* is familiar: like the carline-wife of the corn-harvest, she represents the Earth-goddess. Sickles are clashed solely in honour of the Moon; they are not used in the flax-harvest. Linus is credited with the invention of music because these dirges are put into the mouth of the Flax-spirit himself, and because some lyre-strings were made from flaxen thread.

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The classification of myths according to pattern, brings out the resemblance between the deaths of Ariadne, Erigone and Helen:

Daedalus the famous craftsman, when exiled at Cnossus, delighted Queen Pasiphaë and her daughter Ariadne with the animated wooden dolls he carved for them. This Ariadne, after marrying Dionysus, is said to have hanged herself.

Although Oeneus was the mortal to be given a vine-plant by Dionysus, Icarius anticipated him in the making of wine. He offered a sample from his first jarful to a party of shepherds in the Marathonian woods beneath Mount Pentelicus; who, failing to mix it with water, as Oenopion taught men to do, grew so drunk that they saw everything

double, believed themselves bewitched, and killed Icarius. His hound Maera watched while they buried him under a pine-tree and, afterwards, led his daughter Erigone to the grave by catching at her robe, and then dug up the corpse. In despair, Erigone hanged herself from the pine, praying that the daughters of Athens should suffer the same fate as hers while Icarius remained unavenged. Only the gods heard her, and the shepherds fled overseas, but many Athenian maidens were found hanging from the pine one after another, until the Delphic Oracle explained that it was Erigone who demanded their lives. The guilty shepherds were sought out at once and hanged, and the present Vintage Festival instituted, during which libations are poured to Icarius and Erigone, while girls swing on ropes from the branches of the tree, their feet resting on small platforms; this is how swings were invented. Masks are also hung from the branches, which twist around with the wind.

The image of Maera the hound was set in the sky, and became the Lesser Dog-star; some therefore identify Icarius with Boötes, and Erigone with the constellation of the Virgin.¹²

At Petsofa in Crete a hoard of human heads and limbs, of clay, have been found, each with a hole through which a string could be passed. If these were once fixed to wooden trunks, they may have been Daedalus's jointed dolls, and represented the Fertility-goddess. Their use was perhaps to dangle from a fruit-tree, with their limbs moving about in the wind, to ensure good crops. Such a doll is shown hanging from a fruit-tree in the same gold ring from the Mycenaean Acropolis mentioned above. Artemis the Hanged One, who had a sanctuary at Condyleia in Arcadia¹³, and Helen of the Trees, who had a sanctuary at Rhodes and is said to have been hanged by Polyxo,¹⁴ may be variants of the same goddess.

'Ariadne', which the Greeks understood as 'Ariagne' ('very holy'), will have been a title of the Moon-goddess honoured in the dance, and in the bullring: 'the high, fruitful Barley-mother', also called Aridela, 'the very manifest one'. The carrying of fruit-laden boughs in Ariadne's honour, and Dionysus's, and her suicide by hanging 'because she feared Artemis', suggests

¹²Pausanias vii. 5. 5; Plutarch: *Theseus* 20; Scholiast on Homer's *Iliad* xxii. 29; Nonnus: *Dionysiaca* xlvii. 34-245; Hyginus: *Fabula* 130 and *Poetic Astronomy* ii. 4; Apollodorus: i. 8. 1 and iii. 14. 7; Athenaeus: xiv. 10; Festus: *sub Oscillantes*; Statius: *Thebaid* xi. 644-647; Servius on Virgil's *Georgics* ii. 388-389.

¹³Pausanias: viii. 23. 6.

¹⁴Pausanias: iii. 19. 10.

that Ariadne-dolls were attached to these boughs. A bell-shaped Boeotian goddess-doll hung in the Louvre, her legs dangling, is Ariadne, or Erigone, or Helen, or Hanged Artemis; and bronze dolls with detachable limbs have been found in Daedalus's Sardinia.

The story of Erigone is more complex. Maera was the name given to Priam's wife Hecabe, or Hecuba, after her transformation into a dog, and since Hecuba was really the three-headed Death-goddess Hecate, the libations poured to Erigone and Icarius were probably meant for her. The valley in which this ceremony took place is now called 'Dionysus'. Erigone's pine will have been the tree under which Attis the Phrygian was castrated and bled to death,¹⁵ and the explanation of the myth seems to be that when the Lesser Dog-star was in the ascendant, the shepherds of Marathon sacrificed one of their number as an annual victim to the Goddess called Erigone.

'Icarius' means 'from the Icarian Sea', i.e. from the Cyclades, whence the Attis cult came to Attica. Later, the Dionysus cult was superimposed on it; and the story of the Athenian girls' suicide was probably told to account for the masks of Dionysus, hung from a pine-tree in the middle of a vineyard, which turned with the wind and were supposed to fructify the vines wherever they looked. Dionysus was usually portrayed as a long-haired, effeminate youth, and his masks suggested hanged women. But it is likely that dolls representing Ariadne or Helen were previously hung from fruit-trees. The girls' swinging at the vintage festival will have been magical in its original intention: perhaps the semi-circular flight of the swing represented the rising and setting of the new moon. This custom was brought to Attica from Crete, since a terracotta group found at Hagia Triada shows a girl swinging between two pillars, on each of which a bird is perched.

The name Erigone is explained by the mythographer as 'child of strife', because of the trouble she occasioned; but its obvious meaning is 'plentiful offspring', a reference to the plentiful crop induced by the dolls.

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The Marxists' interpretation of myths is usually a joke, even

¹⁵Ovid: *Fasti* iv. 221ff; Servius on Virgil's *Aeneid* ix. 116.

though Professor George Thomson, who has sharper eyes than most of his colleagues, happens to be a Marxist. But in justice I must concede them the myth of Athene and the spider:

Athene is not recorded to have shown petulant jealousy on more than a single occasion. This is the story. Arachne, a princess of Lydian Colophon—famed for its purple dye—was so skilled in the art of weaving that Athene herself could not compete with her. Shown a cloth into which Arachne had woven illustrations of Olympian love affairs, the Goddess searched closely to find a fault but, unable to do so, tore it up in a cold, vengeful rage. When the terrified Arachne hanged herself from a rafter, Athene turned her into a spider—the insect she hates most—and the rope into a cobweb, up which Arachne climbed to safety.¹⁶

Athene's vengeance on Arachne, at first sight no more than a pretty fable, records an early commercial rivalry between the Athenians and the Lydio-Carian thalassocrats of Asia Minor, who were of Cretan origin. Numerous seals with a spider emblem which have been found at Cretan Miletus—the mother city of Carian Miletus and the largest exporter of dyed woollens in the ancient world—suggest a public textile industry operated there at the beginning of the second millennium B.C. For a while the Milesians controlled the profitable Black Sea trade, and maintained an *entrepôt* at Naucratis in Egypt. Athene had good reason to be jealous of the spider.

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A point that has always puzzled commentators occurs in the partition of the Peloponnese by the 'Sons of Heracles'—the Dorians. What was the meaning of the three badges?

The Heraclids eventually reconquered the Peloponnese in the fourth generation under Temenus, Cresphontes, and the twins Procles and Eurysthenes, after killing the High King Tisamenus of Mycenae, a son of Orestes. They would have succeeded earlier, had not one of their princes murdered Carnus, an Acarnanian poet, as he came towards them chanting prophetic verses; mistaking him for a magician sent against them by Tisamenus. In punishment of this sacrilege the Heraclid fleet was sunk and famine caused their army to disband. The Delphic Oracle now advised them 'to banish the slayer for ten years and take Triops as a guide in his place'. They were about to fetch Triops

¹⁶Ovid: *Metamorphoses* vi. 1-145; Virgil: *Georgics* iv. 246.

son of Phorbas from Rhodes, when Temenus noticed an Aetolian chief-tain named Oxylus, who had just expiated some murder or other with a year's exile in Elis, riding by on a one-eyed horse. Now, Triops means 'three-eyed', and Temenus therefore engaged him as guide and, landing on the coast of Elis with his Heraclid kinsmen, soon conquered the whole Peloponnese, and divided it by lot. The lot marked with a toad meant Argos and went to Temenus; that marked with a serpent meant Sparta and went to the twins Procles and Eurysthenes; that marked with a fox meant Messene and went to Cresphontes.¹⁷

Polygnotus, in his famous painting at Delphi, showed Menelaus with a serpent badge on his shield¹⁸—the water-serpent of Sparta to which the early kings were, apparently, thrown, as leaf-clad 'Green Georges' into a deep pool of the River Eurotas. The Spartans were Lacedaemonians, meaning 'worshippers of the lake monster' and their province was Laconia, meaning 'of the Lady of the Lake'. A fox helped the Messenian hero Aristomenes to escape from a pit into which the Spartans had thrown him;¹⁹ and the Goddess as vixen was well-known in Greece. To judge from the myth of Cephalus and the Teumessian vixen,²⁰ she demanded child sacrifices. The toad seems to have become the Argive emblem, not only because it had a reputation of being dangerous to handle, and of causing a hush of awe among all who saw it,²¹ but because Argos was first called Phoronicum, after its founder Phoroneus; in the syllabary which preceded the alphabet at Argos, the radicals PHRN could be expressed by a toad, *phryne*.

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The myth of Omphale who exchanged clothes with Heracles becomes intelligible when compared with Heracles's later adventure at Cos:

Heracles was sold in slavery to Omphale, the shrewd Queen of Lydia, and he served her faithfully either for one year, or for three, ridding Asia Minor of the bandits who infested it.²²

Omphale had bought Heracles as a lover rather than a fighter, and presently reports reached Greece that Heracles had discarded his lion pelt

¹⁷Apollodorus: ii. 8. 2-5; Pausanias: ii. 18. 7; iii. 13. 4; v. 3. 5-7 and viii. 5. 6; Strabo: viii. 3. 33; Herodotus: vi. 52.

¹⁸Pausanias: x. 26. 3.

¹⁹Pausanias: iv. 18. 6.

²⁰Pausanias: i. 37. 6 and ix. 19. 1.

²¹Pliny: *Natural History* xxxii. 18.

²²Sophocles: *Trachinian Women* 253; Apollodorus: ii. 6. 2; Diodorus Siculus: iv. 31.

and his aspen wreath, and instead wore jewelled necklaces, golden bracelets, a woman's turban, a purple shawl, and a Maeonian girdle. There he sat—the story went—surrounded by wanton Ionian girls, teasing wool from the polished wool-basket, or spinning the thread; trembling, as he did so, when his mistress scolded him. She would strike him with her golden slipper if ever his clumsy fingers crushed the spindle, and make him recount his past achievements for her amusement; yet apparently he felt no shame. Hence painters show Heracles wearing a yellow petticoat, and letting himself be combed and manicured by Omphale's maids, while she dresses up in his lion pelt, and wields his club and bow.²³

What, however, had happened was no more than this. One day, when Heracles and Omphale were visiting the vineyards of Tmolus, she in a purple, gold-embroidered gown, with perfumed locks, he gallantly holding a golden parasol over her head, Pan caught sight of them from a high hill. Falling in love with Omphale, he bade farewell to the mountain-goddesses, crying: 'Henceforth she alone shall be my love!' Omphale and Heracles reached their destination, a secluded grotto, where it amused them to exchange clothes. She dressed him in a network girdle, absurdly small for his waist, and her purple gown. Though she unlaced this to the fullest extent, he split the sleeves; and the ties of her sandals were far too short to meet across his instep.

After dinner, they went to sleep on separate couches, having vowed a dawn sacrifice to Dionysus, who requires marital purity from his devotees on such occasions. At midnight, Pan crept into the grotto and, fumbling about in the darkness, found what he thought was Omphale's couch, because the sleeper was clad in silk. With trembling hands he untucked the bed-clothes from the bottom, and wormed his way in; but Heracles, waking and drawing up one foot, kicked him across the grotto. Hearing a loud crash and a howl, Omphale sprang up and called for lights, and when these came she and Heracles laughed until they cried to see Pan sprawled in a corner, nursing his bruises. Since that day, Pan has abhorred clothes, and summons his officials naked to his rites; it was he who revenged himself on Heracles by spreading the rumour that his whimsical exchange of garments with Omphale was habitual and perverse.²⁴

After completing his service with Omphale, Heracles sacked Troy, but as he sailed home to Greece, five of his six ships foundered in a storm. The surviving one ran aground at Laceta on the Island of Cos, he and his shipmates saving only their weapons from the wreck. As

²³Ovid: *Heroides* ix. 54ff; Lucian: *Dialogues of the Gods* 13; Plutarch: *On Whether an Aged Man Ought to Meddle in State Affairs* 4.

²⁴Ovid: *Fasti* ii. 305.

they stood wringing the sea-water out of their clothes, a flock of sheep passed by, and Heracles asked the Meropian shepherd, one Antagoras, for the gift of a ram; whereupon Antagoras, who was of powerful build, challenged Heracles to wrestle with him, offering the ram as a prize. Heracles accepted the challenge but, when the two champions came to grips, Antagoras's Meropian friends ran to his assistance, and the Greeks did the same for Heracles, so that a general rough-and-tumble ensued. Exhausted by the storm and by the number of his enemies, Heracles broke off the fight and fled to the house of a stout Thracian matron, in whose clothes he disguised himself, thus contriving to escape.

Later in the day, refreshed by food and sleep, he fought the Meropians again and worsted them; after which he was purified of their blood and, still dressed in women's clothes, married Chalciope, by whom he became the father of Thessalus.²⁵ Annual sacrifices are now offered to Heracles on the field where this battle was fought; and Coan bridegrooms wear women's clothes when they welcome their brides—as the priest of Heracles at Antimacheia also does before he begins a sacrifice.²⁶

The women of Astypylaea were offended at Heracles, and abused him, whereupon Hera honoured them with horns like cows; but some say that this was a punishment inflicted on them by Aphrodite for daring to extol their beauty above hers.²⁷

To what Hellenic conquest of the Helladic Island of Cos Heracles's visit refers is uncertain, but the subsequent wearing of women's dress by the bridegroom, when he welcomed his bride, seems to be a concession to the former matrilinear custom by which she welcomed him to her house, not contrariwise. A cow-dance will have been performed on Cos, similar to the Argive rite honouring the Moon-goddess Io.

Classical writers made Heracles's servitude to Omphale an allegory of how easily a strong man becomes enslaved by a lecherous and ambitious woman; and that they regarded the navel as the seat of female passion sufficiently explains Omphale's name in this sense. But the fable refers, rather, to an early stage in the development of the sacred kingship from matriarchy to patriarchy, when the king, as the queen's consort, was privileged to deputize for her in ceremonies and sacrifices—but only if he wore her robes. At Antimacheia, the sacred king was still at this stage. Reveillout has shown that this was the system at Lagash in early

²⁵Apollodorus: ii. 7. 8; Homer: *Iliad* ii. 678-679.

²⁶Plutarch: *Greek Questions* 58.

²⁷Ovid: *Metamorphoses* vii. 363-364; Lactantius: *Stories of Ovid's Metamorphoses* vii. 10.

Sumerian times, and in several Cretan works of art men are shown wearing female garments for sacrificial purposes—not only the spotted trouser-skirt, as on the Hagia Triada sarcophagus, but even, as on a palace-fresco at Cnossus, the flounced skirt. Heracles's slavery is explained by West African matriarchal customs: in Loango, Daura and the Abrons, as Briffault has pointed out, the king is of servile birth and without power; in Agonna, Latuka, Ubemba and elsewhere, there is only a queen, who does not marry but takes servile lovers. Moreover, a similar system survived until Classical times among the ancient Locrian nobility who had the privilege of sending priestesses to Trojan Athene; they were forced to emigrate in 683 B.C. from Central Greece to Epizephyrian Locri, on the toe of Italy: 'because of the scandal caused by their noblewomen's indiscriminate love affairs with slaves.' These Locrians, who were of non-Hellenic origin and made a virtue of pre-nuptial promiscuity in the Cretan, Carian or Amorite style,²⁸ insisted on strictly matrilinear succession.²⁹ The same customs must have been general in pre-Hellenic Greece and Italy, but the matriarchal tradition is kept alive today only at Bagnara, near the ruins of Epizephyrian Locri.

*

A later development in the shift from matriarchal to patriarchal sovereignty appears in the myth of Caenis:

Poseidon once lay with the Nymph Caenis, daughter of Elatus the Magnesian or, some say, of Coronus the Lapith, and asked her to name a love-gift.

'Transform me,' she said, 'into an invulnerable fighter. I am weary of being a woman.'

Poseidon obligingly changed her sex, and she became Caeneus, waging war with such success that the Lapiths soon elected her their king; and she even begot a son, Coronus, whom Heracles killed many years later while fighting for Aegimius the Dorian. Exalted by this new condition, Caeneus set up a spear in the middle of the market place, where the people congregated, and made them sacrifice to it as if to a god, and honour no other deity whatsoever.

²⁸Clearchus: 6.

²⁹Dionysius: *Description of the Earth* 365-367; Polybius: xii. 6b.

Zeus, hearing of Caeneus's presumption, instigated the Centaurs to an act of murder. During the wedding of Peirithous they made a sudden attack on her, but she had no difficulty in killing five or six of them, without incurring the slightest wound, because their weapons rebounded harmlessly from her charmed skin. However, the remaining Centaurs beat her on the head with fir logs, until they had driven her under the earth, and then piled a mound of logs above. So Caeneus smothered and died. Presently out flew a sandy-winged bird, which the seer Mopsus, who was present, recognized as her soul; and when they came to bury her, the corpse was again a woman's.³⁰

This myth has three distinct strands. First, a custom which still prevails in Albania, of girls joining a war-band and dressing in men's clothes; so that when they are killed in battle, the enemy is surprised to discover their sex. Second, a refusal of the Lapiths to accept Hellenic overlordship; the spear set up for worship is likely to have been a may-pole in honour of the New Moon-goddess Caenis, or Elate ('fir-tree'), to whom the fir was sacred. The Lapiths were, however, overcome by the Aeolians of Iolcus who, with the help of their allies the Centaurs, imposed patriarchal government on them. Certain clans seem to have accepted it only in name: Caenis is a type of clan-chieftainess who, as at Argos, wore an artificial beard to assert her right to act as magistrate and commander—thus Caenis became Caeneus, and Elate became Elatus. Third, the ritual recorded on a black-figured oil-jar, in which naked men, armed with mallets, beat an effigy of Mother Earth on the head, apparently to release Core, the Spirit of the New Year; 'Caenis' means 'new'.

The variety of sandy-winged bird released from the effigy will depend on the season at which the rite was performed. If Spring, it may have been a cuckoo, the bird which surmounted Hera's sceptre. In the well-known Cretan sarcophagus from Hagia Triada a cuckoo perches on a double-axe.

³⁰Apollodorus: i. 9. 16; ii. 7. 7 and *Epitome* i. 22; Apollonius Rhodius: i. 57-64, with scholiast; Hyginus: *Fabula* 14; *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* xiii. p. 133ff; Servius on Virgil's *Aeneid* vi. 448; Ovid: *Metamorphoses* xii. 458-531; Scholiast on Homer's *Iliad* i. 264.

RICHMOND LATTIMORE

Pandora

Two o'clock. The house hums with silence, save
where time ticks in the person of the clock
beside the stair, no more than a dry pulse
held in a vein of amber.

Now she comes
alone and barefoot down the stair, and holds
the stopper to the vase she carries. All
that changes through the beating heart of this
midsummer afternoon, goes where her feet
go, and as shadow, over the sunned grass
to where the cool of midnight is forever
trapped in green leaves, and tunneled over stones.
She has not looked behind, and now she looks
and sees nothing but summer in the sun,
and takes the stopper from the vase.

Nothing
comes out. She waits, and with her pulse the world
fails in its perfect wheel of stride. What came
out was not seen. It was the time of change,
and not the ripple on the waterskin,
and not the wind that moves the ripple, not
the bent plash where the ripple swims ashore,
but only the three corners of the way
wind is to ripple, ripple is to wind,
and both are to the water's edge, and edge
is merged with wind and ripple in a still
and solemn fact. Who can see fact? She knows
no time of change; but sudden in the blue
a bolt unpins, as in a downward blur
of swallows, what sweet gray imaginings
rinse from the color of behind your eyes
in love's aftersleep. Green foils shudder. Roots
draw in.

For this, who shall not stand and watch
the beak nod in the rainbow spray of strange
blues, and the smoke of burning houses light
his yesterdays? Who shall not raise from mist
of memory those windows where the film
of pearl is figure? Or who will not leave
his bones to mark the night, and rendezvous
with helm-winged seeds to ride the sky and face
forgiveness in the end of all his days.

Life has begun. This was the act of death.
The penalty of tumult. Here the lines
of shatter in a glass grow big and make
a cloud of fission that will never rain
its life away and die.

Garden goodbye.

She rises and takes up the empty vase.
The gold of summer is a robe to cowl
her quiet's measure as she tiptoes back
to where the clock, dead sentry, lets her pass,
and where her husband slept in the cool room
and does not know the world where he will wake
is all a world away from where he slept.

Translations from Archilochus¹

Epigram on a Willing Woman

Wild fig tree of the rocks, so often feeder of ravens,
Loves-them-all, the seducible, the stranger's delight.

¹Archilochus of Paros lived about 680-640 B.C. Illegitimate son of a Parian noble and a slave mother. Colonist, professional soldier, adventurer, and the first purely personal poet in Western literature.

Poem Addressed to Himself

Heart, my heart, so battered with misfortune far beyond your
 strength,
 up, and face the men who hate us. Bare your chest to the assault
 of the enemy and fight them off. Stand fast among the beamlike
 spears.

Give no ground; and if you beat them do not brag in open show,
 nor, if they beat you, run home and lie down on your bed and cry.
 Keep some measure in the joy you take in luck, and the degree
 you give way to sorrow. All our life is up and down like this.

Fragments

1.

Often along the streaming hair of the gray salt water
 They pray for sweet homecoming won in spite of the sea.

2.

Here the island stands
 stiff with wild timber, like a donkey's bristling back.
 This is no place of beauty, not desirable
 nor lovely, like the lands that edge the Siris streams.

3.

Luxurious in a spray of myrtle she wore too
 the glory of the rose upon her, and her hair
 was all a darkness on her shoulders and her back.

4.

.
 slammed by the surf on the beach
 naked at Salmydessos, where the screw-haired men

of Thrace, taking him in
will entertain him (he will have much to undergo
chewing on slavery's bread)
stiffened with cold, and loops of seaweed from the slime
tangling his body about,
teeth chattering as he lies in abject helplessness
flat on his face like a dog
beside the beach-break where the waves come shattering in.
And let me be there to watch;
for he did me wrong and set his heel on our good faith,
he who had once been my friend.

SYDNEY GOODSIR SMITH

Made When Boskie

[drunk

Yestreen, ah yesternicht
Princes o the bluid we ran
My witch and I
Throu the nichtit toun that cried us soverane
The gods were wi us
Rivers o whisky ran
And credit credit aawhar for the drinkin
The Goddess wi us tae
Hert and pairt, lamp-licht, lowe-licht—
Ach, but our divine debocherie was sweet
Yestreen, ah yesternicht
The aipple and the hazel were as ane.

[firelight

Yestreen, ah yesternicht
Routh and fouth wi surfet tuim'd the gless
And aa as douce as hinnie-dew
As ye, my midnight lass
As luve the benefactor o the feast
Ah Dionysos, weet my lips!
Ah Selanna, cool my brou!
Io! Io! Iacche! Io!

[plenty and
abundance [emptied

Beluvit we o the gods and mortals baith
Ay aa the birlan race
Boued down to worship at her face
And time itsel stude by
To aid our sweet debocherie
Yestreen, ah yesternicht!
When the hazel and the aipple were as ane.

[spinning

Yestreen, ah yesternicht
Betwix her lips and mine nae shadow fell
Nor sall faa, my Horatio!
Here's mair nor thy philosophie can tell—
The little sternies, e'en, in their degrees
Conspired to gie us time and space

[stars

Langour and laurel'd ease
 For aa wir luve and lemanrie—
 All, aa, bewicht as me
 By ae mune-maiden's face
 And the sang that had nae end
 Yestreen, ah yesternicht!
 Ay, but our fine deboch was sweet—
 And the aipple and the hazel were as ane.

[our

Said Heraclitus

Said Heraclitus "Fire and flux,
 Naething but does muve,
 Aathing a flouer in and a deen."
 —And sae wi luve.

Aathing passes, aathing dees
 Aathing an end maun hae
 —This is the greit i the hert o things,
 The *rerum lacrimae*.

[sorrow

This is nae lassies' sentiment
 As some wad hae't
 For youth maun flee
 And fairheid wi't,
 Luve sall hae his day
 And the fire dee.

Sae, unco beauty stounds the hert
 And hert wad greit, but kensna why;
 Sae, luvers deep in glamorie
 Are kin'a waefu, whiles, wi joy.

[fascination, magic

Silent, they gaze in ither's face
 —Aa time sleeps in her een,
 Eternitie sabs in ae embrace
 And, as it breathes, is gane.

—But to retour, she says,
But to retour again.

Queen o wir luve, the white mune rides [our
But syne the dawin breirs, [dawn burgeons
Pale nou the Queen as she doun dwynes [declines
And I maun lea my dear—
But as we twyne, juist as we twyne, [part
Anither tryst draws near
And ilka day apairt
But hastes me to my hert.

Sae Heraclitus' leid [saying
Is richt we pruve:
Aathing a deein and a flouerin
And sae wi luve.

The Quenchless Gleid [fire

Nane hae loed as we [loved
Nane will again—
We are the first and last
O' a doomed royal line.

Did Cleopatra, Antony,
Tristram, Deirdre, ken
The incandescent glorie
We were gien? [given

No; they were but bairns in luve
Their aa but a peerie pairt [tiny
O' this entire combustion,
Daith-drouthie, o the hert. [death-thirsty

Nane afore and nane again—
We the weirdit heirs [fated
As salamanders burn unskaitht [unharmd
In her quenchless fires.

Goddess, be gentil nou
 Douce til thine ain—
 As we drift here i the hert o the gleid [fire
 Sea-born til sea again.

Crime Passional, or Lothario Surprised

Hell has nae fury like
 A woman scorned;
 I ken this truth wi fidge and fyke, [fuss and bother
 I ken wi hunt and horn—
 A reid-wud bull's a doucer sicht [mad
 Nor she I bated yesternicht.

Auld Casanove can gang his ain [go his own road
 (The wily diplomat)
 For even when his breeks were gane
 He kent what he was at,
 But a woman scorned's owre teuch for me! [tough
 —There's nae conceit *in flagrante*.

Pledged til tane, tither I took— [The one . . . t'other
 Man, what a dirry-dan!
 And at the crux o joukerie-pouk
 In the flirdie ran . . . [termagant
 Jeez, I'd suner tine my horn [lose
 Nor bate anither woman scorned.

Sonnet à l'Hypocrite Lecteur

"He (S. G. S.) seems bent upon figuring as the Catullus
 of the movement."

—Reviewer in *The Scotsman*

"Wha's he think he is?", they spier. [ask
 "What richt has he to scribe [write

Nocht ither but praise o a lass
He'd hae's believe
The finest bluid-drap o the race?
Luve til ither bards isna denied
And, certies, isna his monopolie."

His answer's semple, clear:
To be her bard, she his muse
For him existence justifies
And all his follies' haill excuse—
His greatness has been and aye is
Nocht but the loein o this lass.

[whole

[loving

RICHARD CLAY

Red Tags

THE DARK MAN IN THE YELLOW SLICKER leaned forward in the car and pulled the ashtray suddenly out from the dashboard.

"I'm not speakin for myself, Roy," he said, turning to the other man in the front seat. "I only know what I hear, and I hear that Perina's really after your neck this time. They say he hasn't delivered a torpedo in two days, and you know how that hurts them production boys." He sucked on the cigar as he talked, holding it between the two remaining fingers of his scarred and crippled hand.

"Is that my fault? I ask you, Bern, old pal, old faithful, is that my fault? If Perina fixes em up I'll take my tags off." Roy Mallory spoke with a joyful stubbornness. He was a short stocky man of thirty-five with a head of ginger hair above a round red face. He wore a bright plaid shirt under a leather jacket zipped up the front, and he sat behind the wheel of his car with his legs spread apart as if he was driving a tractor.

"They say you gone too far this time, Roy. They say there's nothin wrong with those torpedoes at all. They say you had no right to reject em."

"Yeah? Who says?"

"Around the shop. That's what I hear."

"Yeah? Well, somebody's feedin ya bum dope, pal. I suppose I put those red tags on because I'm some godam spy. Is that it? Maybe I'm trying to keep those torpedoes away from our boys in Korea. Is that it, pal?"

"Listen, Roy, cut the bull. Nobody's using any torpedoes in Korea."

"Yeah? How do you know, pal? They might any day now." Roy spoke with a sharp aggressive tone lacking any humor. He jammed on the brakes at the traffic light. "Maybe they're using em right now," he added.

Bernie snickered as he leaned over and tapped his cigar on the ashtray.

"On what?" he asked. "On them Chinese junks?"

"Junks hell. How about them Red subs? Don't you read the

papers, pal? Don't you know we got killer subs out there to take care of them Reds if they start anything? Jesus, where do you keep yourself, Bern?"

"All right. Forget it."

"I suppose the boys in our subs would feel just swell if they got a good bead on them Reds and one of our torpedoes went wild and dove under. Like hell they would, and that's—"

"Forget it, Roy."

"—an that's just what would happen with those lousy godam torpedoes, and that's why my tags are going to stay on every godam one of them until Perina gets off his ass an—"

"All right. I give up."

"What in hell does that Perina think he's—"

"Listen, Roy. I said I give up. Now save it. I had a bad night."

Roy looked at the older man's gray face. "*You* had a bad night. Christ, what the hell you think I had with Brian's new tooth comin through?"

II

Roy glanced up at the ruby light swaying like a lantern in the April wind. He wiped a cloth across the foggy glass of the windshield and looked down the hill at the familiar city. Its shining roofs were like wet stones in a river bed, glistening gray and blue. The railroad tracks curved around the harbor and ran straight between the factory walls. The long arm of the crane in the coalyard reached up like a black claw above the gray water of the Sound. The clouds streamed low in the northeast gale, and the smoke blew down from the factory chimneys.

"Christ," he said, "what a day for ducks."

Bernie shrugged and turned away, his slicker making a rustling noise as he moved. He spat a piece of tobacco on his palm. As the light changed and the car gathered speed down the hill the rain spurted in around the windows, making dark spots on the seat covers and the edge of the rubber floor.

They didn't speak again in the traffic until the car turned off of Connecticut Avenue into the parking lot by the New England Arms Company. As Roy reached out to open the door Bernie laid the two fingers of his mangled hand on his arm.

"You oughta listen to me, Roy," he pleaded. "In all the years I've known you I haven't tried to give advice to you very often,

but there's times when you need it. I can smell trouble coming. They'll have that production line rolling today, whether you like it or not. I'd lay money on that. Why not try to be reasonable? Why not try to see their side of it? If they say you got no call to reject those torpedoes maybe they got a good reason for sayin it."

"Yeah? I heard their reasons already. How much you wanta bet?"

"Bet? I don't bet. You know I—"

"You said you'd lay money on it, Bern, old pal."

Bernie looked at him strangely. "That's just a way of talking, Roy. You know that."

"Yeah? Well, if you're so godam sure they're going to roll over me why not put some money on it? You're not scared to lose, are you?"

Bernie shook his head. "You're sure riding for a fall," he said with sorrow. They left the car and went to the street where they parted every morning to enter the factory by different gates. The driving rain faded into a cold drizzle as they stood for a moment looking at each other.

"All right," Bernie said wearily, "what's the bet?"

"Five bucks says my tags stay on those fish until they're fixed."

"You're pretty sure of that, aren't you?"

"Yeah." Roy ran his hand over his red hair and put back his hat. "C'mon, Bern. We haven't got all day. What about it?"

"It might teach you a lesson," Bernie said.

"It might teach *you* a lesson, old pal."

Bernie frowned. "All right," he said. "It's a bet." He turned and walked away in the rain, tucking his lunch box under one arm as he leaned over in his yellow slicker with his head bent into the wind.

III

Roy strode along by the wire fence, walking on the balls of his feet like a fighter. As he pushed through the swinging doors of the shop he welcomed the noises and smells that struck him like a blow. He heard with intimate pleasure the threshing sound of the electric drills and the rattle of the rivet guns and the whump—whump—whump of the big stamping press in the corner as it began its daily run. The sight of the forest of machines and the jungle of hanging wires was as familiar as the trellises of his own

garden. The confused stack of tote boxes that lined the aisle along which he walked seemed as neatly arranged and ordered as the groceries packed on the shelves of his neighborhood market. Even the mild odor of hot oil was as friendly as the cooking smells of home.

When he came out of the locker room he had not finished buttoning the front of the starched white jacket that he wore over his plaid shirt. The cotton was so stiff with starch that the buttonholes were like cardboard, and he was still struggling with them when he reached the inspection area at the end of the production line. His men were waiting for him inside of the waist-high partition.

"What a day," he said, nodding. "Hello, Fulton. Got the list?"

"Yes, sir." Fulton handed Roy the ledger already opened to the correct page. Roy read the names in a loud voice. "Bardella, Fulton, Kraychik, Mastrone, Opal, Syzanuk, Westerburg, Wondowski, Yunzil." As he pronounced each name he paused while the man either nodded his head or said, "Here."

Roy looked at the group of nine men who worked for him, and a smile spread over his round face. "What about it, Mike?" he asked, looking at Yunzil. "Ain't it time to pass around cigars again? You ain't holdin out on us, are ya?"

Mike Yunzil spread his thick palms. "It ain't me that's holdin out, Roy. It's the old lady."

The men all laughed, and Roy showed his strong teeth in a grin.

"Okay," he said. "Let's get to work."

As the men fanned out through the final assembly shop to their regular inspection stations Roy sat down at his desk and pulled the work towards him. "Christ, it sure piles up," he said to Fulton, who had stayed behind a moment to put the ledger in the file cabinet. They both stared solemnly at the time cards and rejection reports and inspection forms that littered the desk.

"Yes, sir. It certainly does. Can I help you with any of it, Mister Mallory?" Fulton had a neat polite way of speaking that Roy liked. He was the youngest of the group and had only been with them a short time, but he was very eager and interested in the work.

"That's okay," Roy said. "I'll get to it myself. Thanks, Fulton. Were there any messages before I got here?"

"Yes, sir. Mister Perina stopped by."

"Yeah?" Roy's blue eyes twinkled. "What'd he say?"

"He was mostly complaining about you, Mister Mallory."

"Yeah? About me, eh? Complaining about me, was he? I suppose he wants to cry on my shoulder about his godam torpedoes?"

"I don't know, sir."

"No, no, of course you don't know. Why should you know? Forget it, Fulton. Anything else?"

"Muriel called. She said to tell you that Arthur was coming in today on account of you. She said you'd know what she meant."

"The hell he is."

"That's what she said, sir."

"Those godam sneaky bastards. They went right over my head. They must of called Arthur at home last night. Christ, it's not like he was a well man after two weeks in bed, but that godam Perina—" he shook his head.

"I don't understand it, sir. What's the point of getting him in? He won't take your tags off, will he?"

"Who? Arthur? Hell no. Perina thinks he will, but I know better." Roy leaned back in his chair and spread his legs as he smiled at the young man. "One thing Arthur always says is never put on a tag unless you're sure there's somethin wrong and never take it off again until you're sure it's fixed. Just remember that. You'll never get in trouble that way."

"Yes, sir, I will."

When Fulton had gone Roy unpeeled the paper from a stick of gum and popped it in his mouth. He looked down the production line at the gray torpedoes lying silent and unattended in their cradles. He felt a sense of pride to see his red tag wired to each one like a little red flag. When he had helped to build the torpedoes years ago his pride then had been in the work of his own hands. Now he had a higher duty to inspect with his experienced eyes the work of many other men and to prevent any careless error from leaving the torpedoes short of perfection. This high sense of the importance of his calling came to him now as he rehearsed in his mind what he would say to Arthur when he appeared.

"Well, Roy," a voice growled as the gate banged, "I see you're admiring your handiwork."

Roy jumped up and turned around, and his face flushed at being caught in the act. "Arthur," he said, "it's good you're back. Muriel said you were coming in. How do you feel?"

"Not too well, lad, but I was told I was needed, and here I am. Let's get to the facts." Arthur Curtis, the Chief Inspector, was a Manchester Englishman, born in the metal trades, brought up in them, married to them, and expecting to die in them. There was nothing about metal that he didn't know or couldn't gage with his strong fingers and judge with his hard gray eyes. He attacked every problem as if it was something that could be measured or felt. They said that during The Big Strike he slept on the couch in his office for six months, continuing to work, and yet he wasn't hated. He was above such strife. The men understood that his devotion was not to money but to what they made, and he was loved and respected like a place god, a water god, a woods god in other times.

In appearance he was somewhat soiled, like many older bachelors, his shirts a shade gray from cheap laundries, his elbows shiny, his coat spotted lightly in front and frayed at the cuffs. He was undernourished and remarkably thin from a lifetime of haphazard attention to meals and health. He was immensely tall and wore black clothes like a clergyman. His face was long and narrow, and his skin was parchment white with the blue veins showing. Like all men who receive their strength from devotion he carried the wounds of his calling. Under his sparse white hair was an old scar, long and jagged and still pink. Where his elbow had been hit when the grinding wheel blew up he had a silver joint and could not bend his arm like other men. And he always walked with an odd twisted limp of his left leg from some unmentioned assault that occurred before he came to this country.

"Before we begin, lad," he said, "you should know that Lou Perina was just now in my office and said he'll leave the job before he'll work with you any more."

"Lou said that?"

"It's a fact."

"He must be off his rocker. He's just makin it a case of personalities, Arthur. That's the worst thing he could do."

Arthur squirmed his long thin frame in the chair and straightened out his ill cut suit. "That's the worst thing anybody can do, Roy. What about you?"

"Me, Arthur?"

Arthur pinched the hair in his nostrils thoughtfully. "Aye," he said, "are you above personalities?"

"Look, Arthur, you know me. It's like you always say. No personalities. Get the facts. That's what I do. I'm no prima donna. I'm all for the facts."

Arthur ducked his head and reamed out his right ear with his little finger. "You're sure?" he asked. "You're sure it's not you and him?"

"No, Arthur." Roy caught a glance from Arthur's gray eyes and looked down at his hands like a nervous schoolboy. "It's true we don't always get along too well. I admit that, Arthur. I've tried to get on good terms with him. You know I've tried. But I don't let him bother me. I go by the facts, Arthur. It's all in the day's work. I don't even think of the guy."

The Chief Inspector snorted. "And what about that ball game?" he asked. "There's many of the lads remember that fight."

Roy frowned as if an injustice was being done to him. "Everyone said he called it wrong."

"It makes naught," Arthur said sharply. "It makes naught. They don't remember the right of it. They only remember the fight and the bad blood between you."

"That was a long time back, Arthur."

"Aye, but they remember. And there was the other time at the picnic when I took you to the doctor for the stitches in your lip. That will be remembered too. No, lad, you must face the fact that no one in his right mind would call you and him friends."

Roy felt his face flush at the memory of the dishonest blow. "I never made no bones about it," he said. "I don't like Lou worth a damn. He's mean an tricky. When he hit me on the lip he was smilin and had his hand out like he wanted to make up. But I steer clear of him these days, Arthur. I go by the facts. That's God's truth."

Arthur lifted a corner of his upper lip and sucked through his teeth.

"I hope it is, Roy, because if it isn't you've got us in a parcel of trouble. Perina is up in the front office now telling his side of it. When my turn comes I want a strong case, so let me see what you've got."

Roy opened one of the drawers in his desk and lifted out a package wrapped in oiled paper. He laid it on the blotter and

unfolded it quickly. There was a shiny steel shaft inside the nested paper. It was the thickness and length of a new lead pencil and had a small gear at one end.

"Have a look at this," he said. He handed the shaft to Arthur. "It's the steering shaft from the new guide motor," he said and said no more because he knew he needed Arthur on his side and would not get him there by words. Arthur liked to reach his own conclusions.

The Chief Inspector leaned his chair back on two legs so he rested against the file cabinet. He closed his eyes and ran his thumb along the shaft and over the gear, feeling every tooth, fingering the shaft again like a little silver fife, stroking it slowly with his fingers. After a moment he opened his eyes and frowned at Roy, blinking his gray eyes. He unbuttoned the black bombazine jacket he wore and reached into his vest pocket, fishing out a small magnifying glass. He held the shiny shaft close to his eyes and examined it through the glass, slowly turning it. Suddenly he let the chair drop on its front legs with a crash.

"That's no bloody good, is it, lad?"

"No, sir."

"What made that nick? Do you know?"

"I think it's the bearing. I think they're putting it on backwards."

"That could be, but they should have caught it before. What made you look at it, Roy? You've no business taking the guide motor apart this far down the line. How did you come on it?"

Roy leaned back in his chair and unbuttoned his white shop coat so he could spread his legs and shove his hands in his pockets. He felt now that he was on steady ground. "Well," he said, grinning, "I come on it in a funny way, Arthur. I know I shouldn't of took it apart, but Pat McCormick was down from upstairs on Monday and said two of the torpedoes with the new guide motors was lost off Newport last week."

"Lost?"

"During practice. They went wild an dove under. He said they couldn't find them. They don't know what went wrong."

"Is that a fact? Couldn't find them." Arthur ducked his head and reamed out his left ear with his little finger. "And the only thing different in those torpedoes was the new guide motor. Right?"

"Yes, sir."

"Go on."

"Well, I got an idea that the steering shaft might of broke, an if it broke it would jam the guide motors on them two torpedoes so they would dive. It was just a hunch, but it bothered me. I got my old buddy, Matty Gorliano, to take the guide motor outa the first torpedo on the line and tear it down for me. I was sure surprised when I saw that nick. It fitted exactly what I had in mind. The way I figure it is if the steering shaft is vibrating like it does in the water it might break off there."

"It might. It might. Did you look at the others that you have your tags on there?"

"I was goin to, Arthur, but Lou jumped me. I wasn't sure what to do, but you were out sick, an I had to do something. I couldn't see those torpedoes goin out of here if they were no good."

"Why wouldn't he let you look at them?"

"He said I had no right to take em apart when they already passed detail inspection. I wasn't havin any of that. If it's wrong it's wrong, I said, so I put my tags on all of em."

"He's got a point, lad. You don't know there's anything wrong with those others, do you?"

"No, sir, but I got a good suspicion."

"Aye, but you need more than that." Arthur touched the scar on his scalp. "I'll tell you, Roy, just between you and me, you're skating on mighty thin ice. You're not supposed to do anything but inspect these torpedoes. It's not your job to analyze troubles they have in service, is it?"

"No, sir."

"You're just guessing that those torpedoes went down because of a broken steering shaft. You don't have any facts, do you?"

"No, sir."

"You don't even know a nick like this would make the shaft break, do you?"

"No, sir."

"All we know, lad—" Arthur shook the bright steel shaft at Roy—"all we know is that this is no bloody way to treat a good piece of steel. Right?"

"Right, sir."

"I'll take this with me, Roy. And mind what I say, Roy. Don't let anyone touch those tags unless you hear from me."

"Yes, sir. They won't go near em."

"Good man."

The swinging gate banged as Arthur went out.

IV

Roy was still leaning back in the chair with his legs spread apart when the telephone began to ring. He stared at it from his cloud of exaltation and joy as if it must be something in a dream. Then he shook his head like a man shaking water out of his hair. He picked up the phone.

"Hello," he said. "Final Assembly Inspection."

"Hello, gorgeous," it was Muriel's voice, "have you seen Arthur?"

"He just left, sweetheart. He oughta be back there now."

"Well, he isn't." Muriel laughed in her throaty good natured voice. "You know what he's like, worse than a boy. He could be anywhere."

"Yeah." Roy grinned and shifted his chewing gum. "Well, how about tryin the Crib or out in Experimental?"

"Thank you, lover, I will, but if you see him before I do tell him the General Manager wants to see him."

"General Manager!" Roy bellowed with joy. "Listen, baby doll, Arthur an me are workin on a problem. We're busy today. You call up the General Manager an tell him not to bother us."

"Silly," she said, "tell him yourself. How about cocktails sometime, big boy. Why don't we get together?"

"Sure," he said, grinning at the thought of Muriel's two hundred pounds squeezed into a cocktail dress. "Any time you want, baby. You name the date."

"Oh, you married men," she said. "What I could tell your wives."

He hung up, still laughing, and pulled his chair up to the desk so he could dig into all the paper work that had piled up. He hadn't been able to keep his mind on the routine matters for the two days since he rejected all the torpedoes, but now that Arthur was in command he felt more relaxed, and it didn't seem so hard to concentrate on the trivialities that made up so much of his job.

When the phone rang a half hour later he snatched it quickly, thinking Arthur might want him, but it was only Molly. "Thanks be to Heaven," she said, "I finally reached the Doctor. He said with the rain and his other calls he might be late, but he's phoned

the prescription to the drug store. Can you get home for lunch, Roy, and pick it up on the way."

"Sure can, Molly."

"Thank you, darling. I'll have something hot for you."

"How's himself?"

"Asleep now."

"Any better?"

"His little gum's so swollen he screams when I touch it. You should see him, dear. He even cries in his sleep."

"Ah, the poor little feller. I'll make it as soon as I can, Molly."

When he put the phone down he shook his head to clear it of the vision of Brian's gum stretched like rubber with the points of the tooth trying to push through. He looked up and saw Lou Perina walking towards the partition. Lou always walked duck footed, waddling from side to side with his brown jacket flapping around him and a dead cigar clamped in his teeth. He was a sallow pudgy man of Roy's age with thick brown hair turned gray at the temples. They had started work together on the same bench, but Lou had chosen to stay in the production end, and was now one of the youngest foremen in the shop. He and Roy had climbed by different ladders to an equal height where they stood as rivals not for each other's job but each in his own way dedicated, one to the urgency of production and the other to the strict standards of inspection.

Lou leaned on the top of the waist high partition by Roy's desk and looked inside with an expression of distaste. "When you gonna take those tags off?" he demanded. "I been to the front office, an they say to get em off."

"Yeah?" Roy licked his lips. "Since when is the front office tellin anybody to take off rejection tags? I'm disgusted with you, Lou. You oughta know better. Don't think I didn't hear about you weepin all over the front office. I'm disgusted."

"Hah! You got a nerve to talk about being disgusted. I heard you were cryin buckets to old pappy Curtis."

"Cryin buckets, was I? That's all you know. I was holding him offa you, Lou. That's what I was doing. Holding him offa you. Boy, he's hot as a pistol. He's all set to jump you. I sure had to talk fast to keep him from going to the General Manager about you. Boy, is he ever hot."

"You can go to hell. If you don't take those tags off I'm gonna

do it myself." Lou turned and walked away without looking back. Roy jumped up from his chair and plunged through the swinging gate, banging his knees painfully in his haste, so he limped and hobbled trying to catch Lou.

Lou stopped to light his fat cigar, and Roy caught up to him.

"Look, Lou," he said, breathing hard. "You keep your hands offa them tags. That's orders."

Lou exhaled a cloud of reeking smoke.

"Go peddle your papers," he said. "I'm takin off those tags myself."

Roy ran his hand through his short red hair, remembering what Arthur said. "Listen, Lou. Now hold on. Take it easy. Don't get excited. Let me have a look at those steering shafts in the other torpedoes. If there's nothin wrong with them I'll take my tags off. You an me, we got to cooperate together, Lou."

"*Cooperate!*" Lou dropped his cigar and swooped it up from the concrete floor. "Look at my godam line. For three godam days countin today you had your godam tags on my torpedoes. For three godam days they been layin there. The front office wants to know why the line is stopped. What can I tell them? Can I say inspection is cooperatin with me? The hell I can. You cooperate about as much as a wild cat with a load of buckshot in his tail."

Roy felt his face flush as he took a deep breath. He noticed some of the men had stopped work and were standing by their benches watching. "Christ," he said, "hold onto yourself, Lou. Don't go losin your temper. We can't get nowhere like that. Let me have a look at those steering shafts, an we'll get it settled right now."

"The hell with you." Lou spat on the floor. "I don't have to show you nothin. They already passed inspection."

Roy felt himself trembling as he held himself in check. He saw the workmen's eyes. They watched him cautiously as if he was a policeman in a hostile crowd. "We gotta look at the facts, Lou. How about it? Let's look at the facts," he said soothingly.

"Facts." Lou spat again. "What facts? Just because you say you found some little godam scratch on a steering shaft you act like it's some godam grand canyon. And then you won't even let me see it. How the hell do I know it's there?" Lou was shaking all over, waving his cigar, waving his arms, playing to his audience as he glanced from side to side. "Twenty two godam

torpedoes you red tag right down the line. You can't prove a thing wrong with em, not a godam thing. Who the hell do you think you are, some godam general macarthur? I'm tellin you, big shot, those tags are comin off."

Roy was rocking on the balls of his feet. "Oh, brother," he said, "you sure don't wanta live long. I just wanta see you lay a hand on one of my tags. I just wanta see it."

Lou reached out to the nearest torpedo and ripped off the red tag. He tore it in half and threw the pieces on the floor. "There ya are, big shot," Lou spat on the floor. "Ya got what ya wanted."

Roy heard someone drop a wrench on the floor. He looked down at the pieces of red pasteboard at his feet. He grabbed the front of Lou's jacket in one red knotted fist. "You bastard," he said, "I'm goin to make you eat that in front of your own men. You're goin to get down an kiss it an eat it an like it. You godam, mother lovin—"

For a moment Roy mentally stood aside and saw himself shaking Lou and tried to warn himself to stop, to go back, to get out of it now. But when he felt Lou's fist hit his lower belly he lost this double vision. He could see nothing then. He could see nothing but the ugly face in front of him that blurred as he hit it and hit it and hit it.

V

Before he opened his eyes again Roy could feel the pain in his stomach and the lightness in his head as if he was floating somewhere in space. Whatever place he was in was cold. He could feel the wind on his neck and could hear the rain blowing. He listened to its monotonous sound with his eyes closed, lying absolutely still. After a while he felt immensely quiet and secure inside the overlapping sound of the rain.

When he opened his eyes he found he was alone in Arthur's office, lying on the old lumpy couch. Both windows were open above him. He was lying on his side so he could see Arthur's black umbrella and rubbers in the corner with a little puddle of water on the tile floor around them. The battered gray desk stood alone in the middle of the bare room. There were bookends on the desk made from a shiny steel gear cut in half like the two halves of a cake. They clamped together several tattered copies of books on metallurgy. The walls were covered with black and white photographs of factory buildings with tall chimneys pointing upwards.

In the center of each picture was the tiny figure of Arthur standing in front of the mills where he had worked. Among the pictures was a calendar from the United States Steel Company with a colored drawing of a green oil tanker moored at a red pier in a tropical port.

As Roy looked at the bright calendar his mind began to focus again, and he suddenly remembered everything that happened. He felt his face flush hot with anger. He tried to stand up, but the dizziness and the pain in his stomach held him down. He sat on the lumpy sofa and put his head in his hands.

The door from Arthur's office to the anteroom was partly open so he could see the outside door from the hall when it opened. He could not see who entered, but he heard Muriel's liquid throaty voice continuing a gush of words as she came in from the hall. "—and I says to her what kind of person do you think I am that you can steam open my letters! I may have to live in a rooming house, but I don't have to have a peeping tom for a landlady."

"That's fantastic," the other voice said. It was a sharp waspish voice that he didn't recognize. He leaned forward to see who it was, but Muriel and her friend were both out of sight in the anteroom. "That's perfectly fantastic. And with all the money she charges you, too. Why, if I had her money I could live like Rita Hayworth."

"I believe you could, dear."

"Don't think I wouldn't, dear. But let me tell you, Muriel, if I was you I wouldn't stay there a minute longer."

"But what can I do? I can't just leave like that, Lillian. There'd be talk, and I'm not getting any younger. My gentleman friend lives there, you know. And he's very respectable. Oh, I don't know what to do. It's all so terrible. And I'm so upset about Roy and everything that's happened. I just can't believe it's true."

"It's true, dear. I wouldn't tell you a lie. They said he had to be fired. It's a company rule."

"Oh, the poor bastard," Muriel said.

"I know how you feel, dear."

"That's very nice of you, dear."

"But after all, it isn't like he was related to you."

"So you told me."

"Well, you oughta remember it."

"I will, dear. But didn't anyone have a good word for Roy? He's really a nice guy."

"Sure they did, but they said he was out to make a name for himself. The same with Lou. They said they both got to go."

"Oh, it's a shame, Lillian, it's a dreadful shame. Oh, dear. Well, I'm glad I'm not the one to give Roy the bad news. I'll leave that up to Arthur."

"How right you are, dear."

"Speaking of Arthur, he'll be back from the meeting soon. I better clean up some. Could you move, dear. Thank you. Now, as I was saying—"

In the silence that followed Roy raised his head from his hands and saw Muriel standing in the doorway to the office staring at him. "Why, Roy, honey," she said, "what are you doing in here?"

"Waiting for Arthur to tell me I'm fired, I guess."

"Oh, my God, what did you hear? Did you hear everything?"

"Yeah." As she moved her ample figure towards him he could smell her sweet perfume. "I guess I got it comin'."

"Oh, Roy, I'm sorry, baby." Her full lips quivered and her doll face melted. "I'm so sorry it happened."

"All right," he said. "Don't be so broke up."

"You're a sweet guy to think of me," she said. "You're the sweetest guy I know. Of all people, why did it happen to you?"

"It could happen to anybody," he said.

"That's what you say."

"Yeah. That's what I say."

The hall door banged open, and Arthur appeared behind Muriel, looming over her with his gaunt and drawn face. "That will do," he growled. "I'll speak to him myself, if you please. And mind what I say, Miss Grant. There's to be no interruption of any kind." He frowned as he closed the door firmly after her plump figure.

Roy's mouth felt dry as he watched Arthur limp across the tile floor to his desk. There was only one thing Arthur could say now, and Roy didn't want to hear it the way Arthur would say it.

Arthur stopped by the photographs on the wall and peered at them. He tapped one of them with his finger. "The old Vickers Works," he said, turning his head quickly to look over his shoulder at Roy as if he might have escaped. "How do you feel, lad?" he asked solemnly. "Better?"

"Yes, sir."

"Close the windows, if you please."

"Yes, sir." Roy jumped up from the lumpy couch. As he

lowered the metal frames and shut out the windy rain he was puzzled by Arthur's manner and the curious sad tone of his voice. "He's trying to make it easy for me," Roy thought.

Arthur sat in his chair and tilted it back, pulling on his long nose. He pinched the hairs in his nostrils and glanced up several times at Roy. He seemed at a loss how to begin.

"It's not like I hit him first," Roy said.

"Hush, lad, hush."

"Let me explain how it—"

"Hush, now. Sit down, if you please."

Roy sat down and felt each spring give under his thighs. He flexed his fingers and watched Arthur.

"I'm not a man of words, Roy. I can only give you the facts. First things first, as they say. When I left you at your desk I went over to the detail parts crib and had them tear down every guide motor we have in stock. The steering shaft from each one was nicked like the one you found. I took them in to the General Manager and laid them on his desk. The facts were plain to see. When I finished my story he had to admit we were right. The orders are out now, Roy. There's no torpedo leaving this shop until the fault is fixed."

"Is that so? Is that a fact?" Roy sat back at ease. "Every damned one was no godam good, eh?"

"Aye, lad. It's a fact. And when he asked me who found it I told him about you."

"About me?"

"Aye. About the way you thought it out, and the thin ice we were on for a while. We had a good laugh at that, him and me."

"You did?" Roy felt he was waking from a bad dream to find the sun out and the birds singing. "Did he say any more?"

"He said we all owed you a vote of thanks, and I said we owed you more. He asked me my plans for you, and I told him what they were." Arthur lifted a corner of his lip and sucked through his teeth. "We were talking of that when the news came."

"The news?" Roy asked and wished at once he hadn't.

"The news. Aye, the news." Arthur let his chair crash forward on its front legs. "And what a bloody shame," he roared. "What a bloody bloody shame it was. Like two bloody bantam cocks you are, you and him. Aye, a good pair." Arthur slammed his palm on the desk. "From the very gates of Heaven a path leads straight to Hell. And who is thrown down? Aye, who is thrown down?"

Who walks along the road and knocks on the gates with the very strut and swagger of the red cock of the dawn himself? Aye, who? Who but ignorance. Aye, bloody bloody Ignorance. And you."

Roy bowed his head and waited.

"You shame me," Arthur shouted: "You shame me like my own son. Ignorance sits well on no man but sits worse on one who has been warned."

"He hit me first, Arthur."

"It makes naught. It makes naught. It takes two to make a fight." Arthur stood up in his dark clothes, looking like a clergyman as he raised one hand and waved one finger towards the windows. "When you come in that gate in the morning I want to see the man I hired to do a job. I don't want the man who fights at picnics. I never hired that man, did I?"

Roy was sure he was fired now. He said nothing.

"Did I?" Arthur insisted.

"How do I know?" Roy's voice was sharp with rancor. He was sorry for himself and desperate. "How do I know who you think you hired? All I know is you hired me, Roy Mallory, all of me, whatever I am."

"Ah, don't talk like a fool, lad. I suppose when you married Molly she let you bring your brawling ways into the home. Why should it be different here? We live in a divided world, Roy, and we have to learn to divide ourselves. You can't buck it. You'll never win." Arthur turned his gray eyes to the pictures on the wall. "I found that out on the other side," he said. "I was a tool chaser then, apprenticed in my first year, new in the shop. I was cock of the walk, like you, and careless. I could be careless with myself but not with the machines. The accident was my fault." He slapped the thigh of his bad leg. "For a while they said I could never use it again. And the other two," he added, "my arm and my head," he touched the crescent scar under his white hair, "both my fault." He smiled at Roy. "I was a fool and hard to teach, but I finally learned. When I come in the shop now I have my wits about me, lad. It's not only accidents I avoid but mistakes, too. They say I'm cold blooded, but that's not true. I was born and brought up like you, Roy. But I've learned to divide myself the way it's needed. When I come past the gate in the morning my blood turns cold inside me and stays cold all the time I'm here. And yours should, too, lad. It's your only salvation."

As Arthur spoke Roy watched him with a confused feeling that grew as the words reached his brain. Arthur wasn't talking to him as if he was being fired; he was talking to him like a father to a son, a father whose son is a care to him, and a worry, and a source of concern. Roy felt his face flush hot with shame. What was he so great in this world that he should bring worry to this fine old man? Roy heard himself again boasting to Bernie and saw himself again strutting before his men. The red cock of the dawn he surely was, as stupid too, and as much a fool. And night after night he told Molly of his victories, and empty as they were and false, yet she looked at him with love and pride. And in his darkest heart he counted himself a ready hero to step in the breach when Arthur was ill, hoping Arthur would go, hoping he would die. The fine man before him now.

"I think I better quit," Roy said. "I think I better quit. I'm not doing anybody any good here."

For the first time he saw Arthur's eyes light up.

"Quit," he said. "You rascal, I'd fire you first."

"Well, fire me, then."

"Aye, by and by." Arthur sat on his chair and tilted it back. "I'm pulling your leg, Roy. There'll be no quitting and no firing. That's the easy way out, my fine fellow. We have a job to do here, and I count on you like the front office counts on Lou. He's in there now, you know, like you're in here."

"Yeah?" Roy stood up. "Is he gettin hell too?"

"Aye, lad."

"Then he's not fired, and I'm not fired?"

"Not while we can use you. You're on probation, Roy, and so is Lou. Three times you've had it out, you two, and where did it get you? Three lessons are enough to teach any man the proper way. If it happens again I don't want to see you. Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes, sir. It won't happen again."

"Good man."

VI

When Roy returned to his desk in the inspection area at the end of the assembly line his men came up one by one, looking sideways at him. Mike Yunzil was the first. "Christ, Roy," he said, "I saw it all if you want me to say a word for you. That Lou oughta be fired. He had no right to tear off that tag."

Roy smiled, showing his strong white teeth. "Look, Mike," he

said, "we all know that guy is no godam good. But that's not what counts. We got a job to do, and he knows his job on the production end. I don't want any of my inspectors tangling with guys like that. Get me the facts. No personalities. The facts is what I want. Okay?"

He said this to each in turn, and after they'd gone he leaned back in his chair and looked down the production line at the fat torpedoes in their nests. His red tags were still on them. "It looks like a godam garden," he said to Fulton, who had stayed behind. "It looks like a row of godam roses," he said. "Listen, Fulton, you go down an take those tags the hell off. They done their job, right?"

"I don't know, sir. What do you mean? Nobody's working on the torpedoes. You said never to tag something unless it was wrong and never to take the tag off until it was fixed."

"Okay, Fulton, you learned that lesson right. But this is a little different. The front office says they'll get fixed. If we leave our tags on we'd be right to do so, but it would only be like rubbin their noses in it, so let's take em the hell off."

"Yes, sir."

Roy watched the young man as he took a pair of cutting pliers from the cabinet and walked towards the swinging gate.

"Fulton," he called, "come here a minute."

"Yes, sir." Fulton stood by his side.

"Listen," he said, "tell me one thing." Roy looked right and left. "Lean down," he said, and when Fulton leaned down Roy spoke in a low voice. "Tell me," he said, "did you see Perina after the—you know, after it was over?"

"Yes, sir."

"What the hell did I do to him?"

"He had a black eye—"

"Yeah? He did, eh?"

"Yes, sir. And a bloody nose."

"Yeah?"

"And a big lump on his jaw. Very swollen, sir."

"Swollen, eh? What else?"

"That's all, sir."

Roy smiled and looked down at the row of buttons on his starched white jacket. "What a godam lovely bastard he musta been, the poor bastard." He flexed his fingers and spread his legs as he tilted back in the chair.

"Okay, Fulton," he said, "go cut them tags off."

JORGE GUILLEN

Paso a la Aurora

I

Hay más alba, más alba en tanta lluvia.
Unánime fragor de creación: diluvia.
¡Agua de inmensidad!

Choca en el barro,
Derrumbamiento aún que ya inicia un galope,
El despilfarro
Celeste de algún Lope.
¡Oh generosas nubes del impuro!
Chapotea en lo oscuro,
Galopando con su caballería,
Un caos que se forma
Su guía.
¿Caos en agresión no pide norma?

Alba y lluvia se funden. Con informe,
Quizá penoso balbuceo
Tiende a ser claro el día.
Apura el creador. ¡Querrá que se conforme
Su mundo a su deseo!
Todo, sí, rumoroso y prometido,
Se riza de recreo,
Todo puede ser nido.
... No más diluvio. Llueve.
El agua determina con placer su goteo
Límpido y breve.
A través de un aire más libre la luz se atreve.

Término en desnudez, y sorprendida: tierra.
Con el frescor se esparce
La novedad intacta de un origen,
Que todavía yerra
Por entre los murmullos de su propio destino.

translated by

W. S. MERWIN

Passage to Dawn

I

Dawn, there is more dawn in so much rain.
Unanimous clamor of creation: deluge.
Water of immensity!

In the mud there beats
Even now the downpour, even now beginning a gallop:
The divine
Extravagance of a Lope.
Oh generous clouds of the impure!
There splashes in the darkness,
Galloping with horsemen,
A chaos improvising
Its own guide.
Does belligerent chaos need no paradigm?

Dawn and rain mingle. With formless,
Perhaps painful, babbling
The day gropes toward clarity.
The creator purifies and shapes
The world of his desire!
All, all, rustling and betrothed,
Rippling with amusement,
Merges into nest:
. . . Deluge no longer. It is raining.
Gladly the water, limpid and brief,
Ends its dropping.
Across a freer air the light ventures.

Finality in nakedness and surprise: earth.
There dallies with the coolness
The intact novelty of an origin,
Which even now wanders
Among the murmurs of its own destiny.

Con tal lluvia en las hojas aquel arce
Siente mejor los cielos que le rigen,
Y presente quizá de dónde vino
—Tan nocturno el subsuelo y tan remoto—
Aquella profusión de copa manifiesta.
El agua viva abraza.
No hay coto
Que se cierre a su afán de más floresta,
Floresta alboreante con su traza
De casi perfección en su frescura
De recién prorrumpida criatura.

Este candor—aroma
De terrones mojados—
Conduce a una amplitud por donde asoma
La claridad, aún escalofrío
También.
Palpita apareciendo aquella loma,
Trémula con sus prados,
Con su más que rocío.
Madrugador, un tren
—Y violento—zumba por entre el caserío
De los aún callados.
Hasta lejos del río
Temblor hay de ribera.
Todo en su luz naciente se aligera.

Y prorrumpe de nuevo el gran enlace.
Cándidas, inmediatas, confiadas,
Aguardan las posadas
En que el sol goza y yace.
Convertido en promesa,
El albor se enamora,
Y de querer no cesa
Con ímpetu de aurora.
¿Un instante del iris? Luz ilesa.
¿Qué terroso el olor, qué humedad tan humana!
He aquí, fiel prodigio, la mañana.

With its rain in the leaves the maple tree
Senses more strongly the skies that rule it,
And perhaps foresenses the source
—So nocturnal, so remote the under-earth—
Of that manifest profusion of a goblet.
The living water embraces:
No boundary is there
That checks its desire for further groves,
For groves dawning in profile
Nearly perfect in their coolness
Of the newly-emerged creature.

This purity—the odor
Of wet clods!
Leads to a fullness where clarity,
Still shivering, also
Emerges.
That hillock trembles as it appears,
Quivers with its meadows,
With its surpassing dew.
A train, early riser,
Buzzes—violent—among the clustered houses
Of those who are still quiet.
Even far from the river
There is a tremor of shore.
All becomes weightless in the rising light.

And the great commingling bursts forth anew.
Pure, immediate, serene
Await the dwellings
Where the sun basks and stretches.
Changed into promise
The whiteness plays a lover,
And will not cease from loving
With dawn's impulsiveness.
An instant of rainbow? Gentle light.
How earthy the smell, what human dampness!
And here, faithful prodigy, the morning.

II

¿Vuelve todo a surgir como en primera vez,
Este universo es primitivo?
Mejor: todo resurge en esbeltez
Para ser más. . . . Aquel despliegue de ramaje
Con el retorcimiento varonil de un olivo,
El anónimo pájaro que avanza,
Mudo, sobre la hierba.
La esperanza está aquí. ¡Otra vez la esperanza
Tras el desvelo sin paisaje
—O soñado quizá—de noche acerba!
Aquí, sobre la cima
Ya clara,
Estar es renacer.
Hasta en lo más oculto, bajo tierra, se anima
Su tentación—latente—de algazara:
A plena luz la calidad de ser.

Fluye la luz en ondas amarillas,
Y sobre el horizonte golfos, lagos
Entregan sus orillas
A una transformación en más capricho.
¡Oriente—sin tapices ni varillas
De magos!
Todo es nuevo. . . . Tan nuevo que nadie aún lo ha dicho.
¡El sol! Y no deslumbra. Se remonta con lenta
Suavidad. ¡Ah, ninguno de existir se arrepienta!
Llegarán a su forma los materiales vagos.

¡El sol! Sobre las tierras, sobre la aguas, sobre
Los aires, ese fuego. Todo se le confía,
Nada quiere ser pobre.
¿Rosa, coral? Es realidad, es día.
Nadie columbra entonces—¡nubes!—la lejanía
Sin sentir otra vez que el suelo de la calle
No deja de ser valle,
A pesar de los hombres inminente.
Aquí están su posible silencio más sencillo,

II

Does all surge forth again as though for the first time?
Is this universe primitive?
Better: all surges again into elegance
For something more. . . . That unfurling of foliage
With the virile writhing of an olive tree,
The nameless bird who advances,
Mute, over the grass.
Hope is here. Hope once again
After the vigil bereft of landscape
—Or vigil perhaps dreamed—of bitter night.
Here, on the summit
Already bright
To be is to be reborn.
Even in the sunken and most hidden ground,
Though latent, there stirs the temptation to cry out:
Into full light the quality of being.

The light flows in yellow waves.
And upon the horizon, gulfs, lakes,
Give up their shores
To a transformation into further caprice.
Orient! Without the carpets or the wands
Of Magi.
All is new. . . . So new that no one has spoken it.
The sun! And does not dazzle. Remounts with slow
Suavity. Ah, none repent of existing!
The vague materials shall attain their form.

The sun! Above the lands, above the waters, above
The airs, that fire. All surrenders to it;
Nothing wishes to be poor.
Rose? Coral? It is reality, it is day.
Then no one discerns—clouds!—the distance
Without again feeling that the pavement
Does not cease to be a valley
Imminent in spite of man.
Here is its possible more simple silence,

La misma primavera
Con aquella primera
Gran ventura sin gente,
Aquí están su follaje, su pájaro, su grillo.
Todo se suma necesariamente:
La pared soleada y mi consuelo,
Ese cristal y el cielo.

Un cristal de ventana
Se me ofrece y sujeta
La calle a la alegría de su diafanidad.
¡Oh ciudad bajo el sol, ciudad
Del sol repleta
De gana!

¿La luz no es quien lo puso
Todo en su tentativa de armonía?
Este suelo de valle revelado es alfombra.
A los balcones sube, por la ciudad difuso,
Un runrún que va siendo rumor de compañía.
Extremo pacto:
El sol va a iluminar hasta la sombra.
Chispas hay con rocío que permanece intacto.
Todo, por fin, se nombra.

Suprema perfección: ese andar de muchacha,
Aurora en acto,
Facilidad, felicidad sin tacha.

Las Ninfas

En alto a solas, buscan
Aquel fulgor de un sol
Que las quisiera puras.

Y, gloria, la terraza
Levantará recién
Perfecta su mañana.

Here the spring itself
With that first
Great unpeopled future,
Here are its foliage, its bird, its cricket.
All is heaped up, out of necessity:
My comfort and the sunny wall,
That glass, and the sky.

A window-pane
Offers itself to me, subjects
The street to the joy of its translucency.
O city under the sun, city
Of the sun, replete
With desire!

Is it not the light that places all
In its experiment in harmony?
This valley-floor, revealed, is a carpet.
To the balconies, diffused through the city,
Rises a hum that is a rumor of crowds.
Extreme pact:
The sun is to illumine even the shadow.
There are sparks with a dew that stays intact.
All finds, at last, a name.

Supreme perfection: that gait of a girl,
Dawn in the act,
Facility, unstained felicity.

The Nymphs

They seek, high and alone,
that brilliance of a sun
which would prefer them pure.

And, glory, the level garden
will elevate the new
perfection of its morning.

¡Cielos ya las alturas
Populosas de luz
Sin cortes ni penumbras!

Y la beldad resalta
Como una forma afín
A su interna esperanza.

Más: asciende a fortuna
Mayor de realidad
La carne así desnuda.

Tiempo al Tiempo, o El Jardín

Todo el jardín se ofrece a la mirada.
Desde el palacio oteo y le domino,
Señor casual que reina: tanto admira.

Si dones fluyen de naturaleza,
Sólo el declive de este valle arrostra
Sin cambio tal rigor: mas hermosura.

Entre unos bojes, tentación del tacto,
Dos fuentes mitológicas dirigen
El jardín y mi alma, que se entienden.

Y la vista se esparce por las copas
Tan extremadas de las alamedas,
Dóciles al rumor y al pensamiento.

Abajo, siempre el agua del estanque
Nos reserva unos cielos que aproximan
En aquel interior sus aventuras.

Pasan murmullos de las hojas. Pasan
Como las luces de las estaciones
Por el instante—donde permanezco.

Now the heights are heavens,
populous with light,
without edge or penumbra.

The splendor springs again
as though a form akin
to its own hope in-dwelling.

Further: the flesh, in greater
reality, ascends
thus naked, unto fortune.

Time Unto Time, or The Garden

All the garden is offered to the glance.
A casual lord who reigns, who so admires,
I stare, and from the palace I prevail.

If gifts from the largess of nature flow,
Only the slope of this ravine defies,
Changeless, such austerity of beauty.

By certain boxwood trees that tempt the touch,
Two fountains as a pair of myths direct
The garden and my soul, who know each other.

And there, among their lean extremities,
Sight dwindles through those grovèd poplar trees
Amenable to rustle and to thought.

Below, always the water of the pool
Saves us a few skies that approximate
Their adventures in that interior.

Murmurs that from the leaves approach, murmurs
Make passage by me like the lights of seasons
Receding for the moment—where I abide.

Es él quien me levanta y me respeta
Sobre su cima, sobre los tangibles
Siglos aquí salvados, tan presentes.

Entre la flor, puntual en su retorno,
Y el raso césped sin cesar creciendo,
Lo que fué se recoge, más amigo.

En esta juventud de una corriente
Se acumula, se funde y me preside
La sucesión perpetua del instante.

Aquí los años son compás a tiempo.
Fuente es divinidad: sin fin el agua.
Late un sol mas profundo en la alameda.

It is the garden lifts and honors me
Above his height, above the tangible
Centuries here saved contemporary.

Between the flower, exact in its return,
And the flat turf continually growing,
Now more a friend, what has been is gathered in.

Here beside this infancy of a stream
The perpetual succession of the instant
Gathers and merges, presides over me.

Here the years compass time; the fountain is
Divinity: this water has no end.
Through the grove shivers a profounder sun.

The Poetry of Jorge Guillén

—for Carl J. Burckhardt

BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS there were three poets whose work stimulated me to translation: Paul Valéry, T.S. Eliot, and Stephen Spender. After many years Jorge Guillén became the fourth. One translates not what one wants to translate but what one must. There are poems which summon one like women. Some appeals, however, are lost. They fade into the unspoken. They suggest possibilities which do not materialize. Jorge Guillén at one point uses the antithesis between existing and persisting. More than a mere summons is required if the bridge is to be broken. It must sound again and again, penetrate deeper and deeper, persist, demand. Then the dams break. Congenialities grasp one another, recognize one another, affirm one another. Only in such a way can I understand the efficacy of translation. It is an answer to that power in the creative which makes demands. It is the most authentic form of affirmation.

Jorge Guillén (born in Valladolid in 1893) has taught literature in Paris, Oxford, Seville, and later in the United States where he is still living. One finds him among the contributors to the *Revista de Occidente*, founded in 1923 by Ortega. A prose meditation entitled "Aire-Aura" (October 1923) perceives in the atmosphere the origin of transcendence ("the air is not human; the air is heaven") and elaborates this boundary-concept in terms of Christ's Resurrection. Poems followed in the *Revista*. A translation of Valéry's "Cimetière marin" (June 1929) also appeared. The poems were collected as *Cantico*, 1928 (seventy-five poems); augmented in 1936, 1945 and 1950. This last edition contains three hundred and thirty-four poems and is marked as the "first complete edition". Guillén is the creator of a single work which is a single Hymn of Praise (Lobgesang). As it now stands, it comprises the results of three decades of work.

According to Aristotle, all poetry from the beginning is either praise or blame. Goethe also defined poetry as the "human Hymn of Praise to which Godhead might gladly listen" ("Lobgesang der

Menschheit, dem die Gottheit so gern zuhören mag"). The literature of the last hundred years has exploited blame in all its varieties more than praise. Everything that twenty or thirty Naturalisms, Expressionisms and Existentialisms of all countries and continents have gathered as material for the reproach of mankind, life and being, can, in effect, be collected under the neutral concept of blame. The sum of these utterances represents the upshot of the European nihilism which Nietzsche diagnosed. "You will either destroy your reverence—or yourselves." Modern literature has fulfilled its historical mission in destroying all reverence. Twenty years ago, Gottfried Benn struck a balance: "Nach dem Nihilismus". It was premature; for the "Revolution des Nihilismus" followed closely after the written word. Since then, the problem has not been freshly posed.

Aristotle's classification is naturally somewhat primitive. No more than life does literature allow itself to be ordered according to a neatly disjunctive schema. It can contribute to a preliminary sifting and sorting and has then served its purpose. The literature of nihilism ("blame") becomes interesting at the point where, out of denial and doubt, "praise" blooms like a summer flower amidst our ruined cities. In the ruined garden grew lyric poems, and from hospitals we have seen hymns raise themselves like lilies—as also in the work of Benn.

But one seldom finds in the twentieth century a poetic *oeuvre* like Jorge Guillén's which is so exclusively a song of praise. Everything here is written in a major key, everything dances and rejoices in the sun. Here are no dissonances, no neuroses, no "fleurs du mal". The incomprehensible high creations are as glorious as on the first day. Many readers will need at first to accustom their eyes to these cataracts of light. Here is a realm without tragedy, without bitterness, without lament. Where else in the modern lyric can one find this? Only once did Stefan George strike this note:

*Hegt den Wahn nicht: mehr zu lernen
Als aus staunen überschwang
Holden blumen hohen sternern
Einen sonnigen Lobgesang.¹*

¹Hug not madness: there's more to learn
From the overflow of wonder
Charming flowers, sovereign stars
A sun-lit hymn of praise.

George was aware of these possibilities, but the path he had to follow lay in other directions. Valéry produced a hymn to the dawn and exalted the mathematical beauty of Greek columns:

*Nous allons sans les dieux
A la divinité.²*

But his serpent hails the sun as a stain:

Soleil, soleil! . . . Faute éclatante³

and extends this complaint to the entire realm of being:

*Que l'univers n'est qu'un défaut
Dans la pureté du Non-Etre.⁴*

To be sure, it is the perspective of the serpent. But neither is it very different from that of Monsieur Teste, Valéry's intellectual hero.

Jorge Guillén's affirmation of being stands in flaming contrast to this. In modern literature it is solitary and unique. "Poetry is ontology", Maurras once decreed. If this sentence should prove to be true, Guillén's poetry would be a striking exemplar. But it is as fortunately independent of every philosophy as of every intellectual convention. Even the Essentialism, currently being prepared on the Left Bank for the time when Existentialism is exhausted, will not affect it. The poetry of Guillén is a self-sufficient statement. It needs no philosophical commentary, well as it might serve the philosophers as a text for meditation.

"Mas allá" is the poem which reveals the well-pondered composition of the *Cantico*. It originates in the situation of morning awakening. The soul responds with happy amazement to the dawn of a fresh day. It is a sensuous-intellectual amazement before the fact that something *is* ("das nicht lieber nichts ist", as Scheler said). This invasion of being carries with it a blessed certainty which knows nothing of care or existential anxiety. It summons the soul to a single-voiced and a thousand-voiced harmony. Its will-to-be responds to the world's being. A jubilant movement reaches upward, ever higher, reaches beyond all bounds. "Above and beyond"—that is what, translated literally, the title means. Can a single life, a single time, satisfy this hunger for being? The soul demands more ("La Florida"): elemental

²*We go without the gods
Towards divinity.*

³*Sun, sun! . . . Illustrious fault.*

⁴*The universe is but a blemish
In the purity of Non-being.*

designs, immediacies beyond time, primitive uplands of eternity:

*Yo necesito los tamaños
Astrales: presencias sin años,
Montes de eternidad en bruto.*⁵

The morning awakening to the world is a theme for which Guillén continually finds new melodies ("Der Morgen kam," according to Goethe: "Der junge Tag erhob sich mit Entzücken . . .") To awake in the pale dark of night . . . then a rending, a bursting open, a vertical inrush . . . and already the dwindling excitement of a reconstituted world. The world and the soul are again in tune:

*Otra vez el ajuste prodigioso.*⁶

The wonder of a precise mechanism of the soul! In Guillén's hymnic affirmation of life there is nothing drunken, roaring, chaotic. The rays of light operate with mathematical rigor:

*Que al mediodía ciñen
De exactitud.*⁷

The autumn is an "island with a strict profile", which lets one forget "the indefinite ocean waves". A love for the line is proclaimed. It reaches its perfection in the circle which, at the same time, is "the secret of heaven". For there the circle passes into the vault of the globe. The line fulfills itself in space: not in infinity but in its palpable rounding off—in volumes of the fulfilled spacial figure (Gestalt). This determination is one of the most characteristic features of Guillén's poetic world:

*¡Oh concentración prodigiosa!
Todas las rosas son la rosa,
Plenaria escencia universal.
En el adorable volumen
Todos los deseos se sumen.
¡Abinco del gozo total!*⁸

⁵I need those astral dimensions:
Presences without years,
Eternal and unpolished mountains.

⁶Once again the fitting wonder.

⁷That gird the noon
With exactitude.

⁸Oh, prodigious concentration!
All the roses are the rose,
Complete universal essence.
All desires are submerged
In the bulk to be adored:
Eagerness of total joy!

The path from the initial local destruction of the ordering function of the line to the fulfilling presence of the space-figure is one of the forms in which Guillén's experience of being reveals itself. But at the same time it is an image of the fulfillment of motion in which the initial vibration of feeling reaches stepwise up to the poem. It is the way "to the poem" (*Hacia el poema*), "to the names" (*hacia el nombre*). One discovers Guillén's poetic in an analysis of this path and this striving. A rhythmic vibration, apart from all content and any determinate statement, is initially set up. Submitting himself to it, the poet escapes from the confusing dream. Words come to his aid, "destined to reveal themselves in the potent figure of space" (*decididas a iluminarse en vívido volumen*). The sound takes on contours, the form becomes a "life-belt".

*Hacia una luz mis penas se consumen.*⁹

The world as seen by the eye will be recapitulated and established in valid poetic speech where it is contained as possibility (*forma de ese mundo posible en la palabra*) as all life struggles towards its most explicit realization (*Vida extrema*). All of life, but also all utterance (*si del todo vivir, decir del todo*) is the poem's task. Only lived life is unfulfilled life, and seeks transformation into clear, unbroken, clean fullness of form:

*Forma de plenitud precisa y casta.*¹⁰

Form in this sense is nothing else than the apex of a curve of powers (*Kräftekurve*): the splendor of its fitting mastery. It is a final result, beyond the beautiful and the contemptible:

*Por si se cumple, mas allá del gusto.*¹¹

The aspiring movement, above and "on outward", returns again. It signifies the salvage and salvation of the luminous world. The life-process of such poetry begins as the beating of a pulse which at the same time is an impulse; it actualizes itself in a nexus of words (*el inicial tesoro de una frase*). Poetry becomes a defining function, the most overt fruition of life:

*Gracia de vida extrema, poesía!*¹²

⁹All my griefs are spent toward a light.

¹⁰Fullness of form, chaste and precise.

¹¹Through itself, beyond taste, it is fulfilled.

¹²Grace of extreme living, poetry!

It thereby participates in a world-process which offers itself to the inner as well as the outer experience of the poet. All being takes part in ascension, it seeks to go beyond itself. The white pomp of clouds over the sea seems to be drowned in grey, but only "to beget crimson-colored borders". A bush unfolds in spring. Slowly the flowers begin to color. Are they only coloring? No, the flowers tremble with impatience, they seek to fulfill their names: "lila" (lilac).

As the clouds blazon themselves in carmine, as the flowers fulfill their names in their colors, so does the poet exalt things as he names them, as Adam in the garden of Paradise according to the Scripture: "And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field." According to ancient belief, things first became real in being named. By naming all the creatures, Adam established his control over them. To name the nameless is the dignity and office of the poet. He thereby participates in the work of creation:

*Ser henchido de ser jamás empieza
Ni termina. Amor: tu siempre añades.
Creo en la Creación mas evidente.*¹³

A primitive recollection of the first garden breathes through the poetry of Jorge Guillén:

*Es la luz del primer
Vergel, y aun fulge aquí,
Ante mi faz, sobra esa
Flor, en ese jardín.*¹⁴

With the regenerated garden of his hymn of praise, Jorge Guillén places himself in the first rank of living poets.

[Translated from the German by R. W. Flint]

¹³Fullness of being never ends
Nor begins. Love: you always add.
I believe in Creation, ever more evident.

¹⁴It is the light of the first
Paradise, and it still shines here
Before my face, upon that flower,
In the garden.

NORTHROP FRYE

Myth as Information

THE FIRST VOLUME OF THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION of Ernst Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* has just appeared.¹ As the German edition of this volume was published in 1923, the translation is very belated, and by now will chiefly interest students of philosophy who are not sufficiently concerned with Cassirer or acquainted with German to have consulted the original. This is a restricted range of usefulness, not enlarged by the fact that the real contemporary importance of Cassirer's thought is displayed not in this book but in the later *Essay on Man*, written in English and now available in a pocket edition.² The *Essay on Man* is crisper, more concise, more conclusive in the direction of its arguments, and, as befits its American setting, more evangelical. Cassirer's work as a whole has been pretty thoroughly assimilated since his death in 1945, and the first volume of his *magnum opus* has now a largely historical importance for anyone who, like the present writer, cannot claim to be a technically competent philosopher.

That historical importance is, of course, very considerable. It is hardly too much to say that the bulk of what is distinctive in twentieth-century thought, in the non-mathematical division, has been constructed around the word "myth". The major political philosophies of today, whether democratic, communist or fascist, are still firmly rooted in their nineteenth-century formulations. But when the century opened the study of myth in psychology by Freud, and in anthropology by Frazer and others, had started a radically new departure in social thinking, and in 1922, the year that Proust died with his great mythical *Recherche* complete, the appearance of *The Waste Land*, *Ulysses* and the more ectoplasmic *Fantasia of the Unconscious* startled the literary public also into realizing the importance of myth. It was the next year that Cassirer began to bring the problem into systematic philosophy,

¹Translated by Ralph Manheim, preface and introduction by Charles W. Hendel. Yale University Press. \$5.00.

²Doubleday, Anchor Books. 75c.

and in the thirty years since then the word *myth* has continued to produce that uninterrupted flow of talk which is generally called, and sometimes accompanies, a steady advance in thinking.

Cassirer appears to have done a good deal to break down the provincialism of the discursive reason in philosophy. Logic is based on language, and is a specialized development of language, but it is by no means the final cause of language. Not only is language itself prelogical, but there is no evidence whatever that man learned to speak primarily because he wanted to speak rationally. The simultaneous and parallel development of the languages of myth and literature show that there are other kinds of structures to be made out of words. Thinking is one of many things that man does; hence it is a part of a whole, the whole being the "functional unity" of human work in the world. To put logical thought in its place as one of a number of human operations is more realistic than to consult it as an oracle which reveals to man the existence of a systematic and rational order in the objective world. For when reason in the mind discovers rational order in the universe outside it, this discovery is largely a matter of falling in love with its own reflection, like Narcissus.

The "philosophy of symbolic forms", then, is a philosophy which starts by looking at the variety of mental constructions in human life. These include science, mathematics, philosophy, language, myth and the arts, and in the aggregate are called culture. Each of these constructions is built out of units called symbols, which are usually words or numbers, and which, approximately, owe their content to the objective world and their form to the categories of human consciousness. For further details see Professor Hendel's lucid introduction, which traces Cassirer's conception back to the "schema" of Kant. We may also divide these constructions into a logical group and another group which is either pre- or extra-logical, and which consists mainly of language, myth and the arts. Folke Leander, writing in the volume of the Library of Living Philosophers devoted to Cassirer, remarks that Cassirer has not established the relation among these three, any more than he has established that there are in fact three of them, because there is no adequate treatment of aesthetics in his work. (The chapter on art in the *Essay on Man* is largely amiable burble.) It is perhaps worth while trying to

follow up this suggestion, and to see if we can discover what, on the basis of Cassirer's general conception of symbolic form, the relation of myth actually is to language on the one hand, and to literature (the only one of the arts which seems to have a *direct* connection with myth) on the other.

The relation of grammar to logic may provide us with a useful analogy. Logic grows out of grammar, the unconscious or potential logic inherent in language, and we often find that the containing forms of conceptual thought are of grammatical origin, the stock example being the subject and predicate of Aristotelian logic. It would be interesting to develop John Stuart Mill's suggestions about the relations of grammar and logic, which are referred to by Cassirer, and are perhaps not as indefensible as he thinks, though they may need restating. One wonders, for instance, about the parallelism between the parts of speech and the elements of thought in our Classical-Western tradition, where nearly all the important languages belong to the Aryan group. There is surely some connection between the noun and the conception of a material world, the verb and the conceptions of spirit, energy and will, the adjective and universals, the adverb and value, the conjunction and relation, and so forth, that would bear investigating.

It is disappointing to find that not even in the *Essay on Man* is there any reference to the *contemporary* problems involved in the relation of grammar and logic. Cassirer shows how language begins in spatial mythopoeia and the projection into the outer world of images derived from the human body. He does not show how these metaphors organize our writing and thinking as much as ever today: nearly every time we use a preposition we are using a spatial myth or an unconscious diagram. If a writer says: "But on the other hand there is an additional consideration to be brought forward in support of the opposing argument," he may be writing normal (if wordy) English, but he is also drawing elaborate geometrical doodles, like an armchair strategist scrawling plans of battle on a tablecloth. Again, the fluid primitive conceptions dealt with by Cassirer, the Polynesian *mana*, the Iroquois *orenda*, and the like, are participial or gerundive conceptions: they belong in a world where energy and matter have not been clearly separated, either in thought or into the verbs and nouns

of our own less flexible language-structures. As energy and matter are not clearly separated in nuclear physics either, we might do well to return to such "primitive" words ourselves. The words "atom" and "light", for example, being nouns, are too material and static to be adequate symbols for what they now mean, and when they pass from the equations of a physicist into the linguistic apparatus of contemporary social consciousness, the grammatical difficulties in the translation show up clearly.

Of course one would have to avoid the scholar's mate in this kind of argument: the fallacy of thinking that we have explained the nature of something by accounting for its origin in something else. Logic may have grown out of grammar, but to grow out of something is in part to outgrow it, and to try to reduce logic to grammar would be as futile as a good many earlier attempts to reduce grammar to logic. For grammar may also be a hampering force in the development of logic, and a major source of logical confusions and pseudo-problems. These confusions extend much further than even the enormous brood of fallacies spawned by paronomasia, or the use of words in a double or manifold sense, which make up the greatest number of such booby traps. Even Cassirer's major effort in thought illustrates a grammatical problem: he abandoned the search for a systematic or rational unity in human consciousness in favor of recognizing a "functional unity" of a number of various activities that obviously do exist. This had the effect of transferring his conception of reason from the definite to the indefinite article, of saying that reason is *a* phenomenon of human consciousness, which is indisputably true, instead of saying that human consciousness is rational (or *the* reason), which involves one in a wholly unnecessary struggle for the exclusive possession of an essence. The other day two students came to me and one said: "I say art is expression; Jim here says it's communication: which is it?" I said that if he would admit that art may communicate, Jim would probably admit that it may also express, and they could divide the essence peaceably between them. It was the same grammatical *pons asinorum* on a small scale. It is no wonder, then, that many logicians tend to think of grammar as something of a logical disease. Some of them have maintained that mathematics is the real source of coherence in logic. I have no opinion on this, but as a literary critic I know

that as long as logic continues to make a functional use of words, it will continue to be involved in all the problems of words, including grammar and rhetoric.

When people speaking different languages come into contact, an *ideogrammatic* structure is built up out of the efforts at communication. The figure 5 is an ideogram, because it means the same number to people who call it five, cinq, cinque, fünf and a dozen other things. Similarly, the purely linguistic associations of English "time" and French "temps" are perceptibly different, as a comparison of the phrases "good time" and "beau temps" shows. But it is quite practicable to translate Proust or Bergson on time into English without serious risk of misunderstanding the meaning. When two languages are in different cultural orbits, like English and Zulu, the ideogrammatic structure is more difficult to build up, but it always seems to be more or less possible. The problems of communication between two people speaking the same language may be at least equally great, because more difficult to become aware of, but even they can be surmounted.

This ideogrammatic middle ground between two languages must itself be a symbolic structure, not simply a bilingual dictionary. When we learn a closely related language like French we discover French equivalents for all English words and constructions. But obviously one cannot walk into a Polynesian or Iroquois society and ask: "What are *your* words for God, soul, reality, knowledge?" They may have no such words or concepts, nor can we give them our equivalents for mana and orenda. Yet it is equally obvious, after examining the evidence in Cassirer's book, that it is possible, with patient and sympathetic study, to find out what is going on in a Polynesian or Iroquois mind, and thereby do something to disentangle one's own mental processes from the swaddling clothes of their native syntax. But we can only do so by trying to get the "feel", the sense of a comprehensible and communicable inner structure, in the other language which can be identified with another inner structure growing out of our own language, even if its syntactic setup is entirely different. It is out of such ideogrammatic inner structures, whether produced linguistically between two languages, or psychologically between two people speaking the same language, that the capacity to assimilate language to rational thought develops. The humanist

theory of education has always, and rightly, stressed the importance of the conflict of different habits of linguistic expression, specifically of the modern and Classical languages, in the training of the mind. In his *Essay on Man* Cassirer suggests that the historical origin of scientific and mathematical thought may have been a similar linguistic conflict in Mesopotamia between the Sumerian and the Semitic Akkadian languages.

It is not so often realized that the relation between grammar and literature is closely parallel to the relation between grammar and logic. Poetry seems to be much more deeply involved in verbalism, because so much of it is untranslatable, and because ambiguity and paronomasia are as much virtues in poetry as they are vices in discursive thought. Yet in reading a poem we make an effort to comprehend the meanings of the words employed in it which is quite separate from the understanding of their dictionary meanings. The question of what a word conventionally means is always qualified, sometimes contradicted, by the other question of what it means in the poem, and the poet, like the philosopher, may protest against a merely conventional understanding of his more precise meaning, his "sens plus pur", in Mallarmé's phrase. Poetry, as much as discursive or rational writing, grows out of language, yet remains in a state of tension against language. Hence the development of an understanding of literature, as of rational thought, involves the building up of ideogrammatic inner structures like those above mentioned, though the inner structures in this case would not be structures of ideas but of something else.

The content or sense of poetry, its aspect as an imitation of nature, is always more or less translatable into another language, or another aspect of the same language. But to render the sense of a poem only is not full communication. What cannot be translated is a complex of elements, of which one is a quality that we may vaguely call word-magic, and which seems to depend on the characteristics of the language employed. Yet one feels that poetry is more communicable than this. Surely the languages of Europe have co-operated to produce a great literary culture in a way that goes far beyond such a mixture of exchangeable sense and competing tintinnabulations. We seem to have missed something. The content of a poem, we say, is translatable. What about

the form, which is usually the complementary term to content? Nobody would call word-magic or anything dependent on linguistic factors the form.

Cassirer's "symbolic form" is neither subjective nor objective: it is intermediate, taking its structure from the mind and its content from the phenomenal world. In the symbolic forms of all the arts this inseparable unity of a mental constructive principle and a reproductive natural content reappears. Painting, for instance, has the imitation of nature as one of its elements, and design, the symmetry and balancing of outlines and masses, as the other. Abstract, or more strictly non-representational, painting (which is still imitating nature in the Aristotelian sense) is about as close to the formal pole as we can get; *trompe l'oeil* puzzles are nearest the imitative pole. For some reason the main emphasis has been well over towards the imitative end in nearly all the theory and most of the practice of Western painting. Music, on the contrary, has always been primarily formal in our tradition, and imitative or "programme" music kept within strict bounds. Literature, like painting, has, at least in its criticism, tended to give more attention to its extroverted, nature-imitating aspect. Its formal or constructive principles are still so little understood that there is no adequate terminology to describe them.

The word myth means different things in different fields: in literary criticism it is gradually settling down to mean the formal or constructive principle of literature. Where there is a fiction, the shaping form, to which every detail in the writing has to be assimilated, is the story or plot, which Aristotle called *mythos* and declared to be the "soul" of the fiction. In primitive periods such fictions are myths in the sense of anonymous stories about gods; in later ages they become legends and folk tales, then they gradually become more "realistic", i.e., adapted to a popular demand for plausibility, though they retain the same structural outlines. Profound or "classic" works of art are frequently, almost regularly, marked by a tendency to revert or allude to the archaic and explicit form of the myth in the god-story. When there is no story, or when a theme (Aristotle's *dianoia*) is the centre of the action instead of a *mythos*, the formal principle is a conceptual myth, a structure of ambiguous and emotionally charged ideas or sense data. Myths in this sense are readily translatable: they

are, in fact, the communicable ideogrammatic structures of literature.

Literature resembles mathematics, and differs from other structures in words, in that its data are hypothetical: mathematician and poet alike say, not "this is so," but "let this be". Mathematics appears to be a kind of informing or constructive principle in the natural sciences: it continually gives shape and coherence to them without being itself involved in any kind of external proof or evidence. One wonders whether, in future, when we shall know so much more about what literature says and how it hangs together than we do now, we shall come to see literary myth as similarly a constructive principle in the social or qualitative sciences, giving shape and coherence to psychology, anthropology, theology, history and political theory without losing in any one of them its own autonomy of hypothesis. Thus it looks now as though Freud's doctrine of an Oedipus complex were an explanation for the dramatic effectiveness of *Oedipus Tyrannos*. Perhaps in another few years we shall decide that we have got it the wrong way round: that the dramatic myth of Oedipus informed and gave coherence to Freud's psychology at this point. Such a reversal of perspective would bring us close to Plato, for whom the purest formulation of dialectic was either mathematical or mythical. The basic structure of myth is the metaphor, which is very similar in form to the equation, being a statement of identity of the "A is B" type. I imagine that the third quarter of the century will see Cassirer's principles developed in some such direction as this.

DONALD JUSTICE

Ladies by Their Windows

1

They lean upon their windows. It is late.
Already it is twilight in their house;
Autumn is in their eyes. Twilit, autumnal—
Thus they regard themselves. What vanities!
As if all nature were a looking-glass
To publish the small features of their ruin!

Each evening at their windows they arrive
As in anticipation of farewells,
Though they would be still lingering if they could,
Weary, yet ever restless for the dance,
Old Cinderellas, hearing midnight strike,
The mice-drawn coach impatient at the door.

2

The light in going still is golden, still
A single bird is singing in the wood,
Now one, now two, now three, and crickets start,
Bird-song and cricket-sigh; and all the small
Percussion of the grass booms as it can,
And chimes, and tinkles too, *fortissimo*.

It is the lurch and slur the world makes, turning.
It is the sound of turning, of a wheel
Or hand-cranked grinder turning, though more pomp
To this, more fiery particles struck off
At each revolve, and the last turn reveals
The darker side of what was light before.

Six stars shine through the dark, and half a moon!
The night-birds spiral upwards in a flash
Of silvery underwings, silver ascendings,
The light of stars and of the moon their light,

And water-lilies open to the moon,
The moon in scales over the water's face.

To shine is to be surrounded by the dark,
To glimmer in the very going out,
As stars wink, sinking in the bath of dawn,
Or as a prong of moon prolongs the night—
Superfluous curve!—unused to brilliancies
Which pale her own, yet splurging all she has.

3

So ladies by their windows live and die.
It is a question if they live or die,
As in a stone-wrought frieze of beasts and birds
The question is, whether they go or stay.
It seems they stay, but rest is motion too,
As these old mimicries of stone imply.

Say then they go by staying, bird and beast,
Still gathering momentum out of calm,
Till even stillness seems too much of haste
And haste too still. Say that they live by dying,
These who were warm and beautiful as summer,
Leaning upon their windows looking out,

Summer-surrounded then with leaf and vine,
With alternate sun and shade, these whom the noon
Wound once about with beauty and then unwound,
Whose warmth survives in coldness as of stone,
Beauty in shadows, action in lassitude,
Whose windows are the limits of their lives.

Sonnet

The walls surrounding them they never saw;
The angels, often. Angels were as common
As birds or butterflies, but seemed more human.

As long as the wings were furled, they felt no awe.
Beasts, too, were friendly. They could find no flaw
In all of Eden: this was the first omen.
The second was the dream which woke the woman:
She dreamed she saw a lion sharpen his claw.
As for the fruit, it had no taste at all.
They had been warned of what was bound to happen;
They had been told of something called the world;
They had been told and told about the wall.
They saw it now; the gate was standing open.
As they advanced, the giant wings unfurled.

In Bertram's Garden

Jane looks down at her organdy skirt
As if *it* somehow were the thing disgraced,
For being there, on the floor, in the dirt,
And she catches it up about her waist,
Smooths it out along one hip,
And pulls it over the crumpled slip.

On the porch, green-shuttered, cool,
Asleep is Bertram, that bronze boy,
Who, having wound her around a spool,
Sends her spinning like a toy
Out to the garden, all alone,
To sit and weep on a bench of stone.

Soon the purple dark must bruise
Lily and bleeding-heart and rose,
And the little Cupid lose
Eyes and ears and chin and nose,
And Jane lie down with others soon,
Naked to the naked moon.

WILDER BENTLEY

Four Canons from the T'ang

[In the conviction that the twenty-four canons of classical Chinese art are pliant and suggestive enough to be of universal application, I have chosen four of these canonical compounds as themes for poems. The first, *Secret-genuineness (Shen-miao)*, is introductory. Its opening stanza sums up what I hold to be the artist's obligation to our time; its subsequent three stanzas, by indirection, reveal in their turn something of the significance of each of the other three poems in the same sequence. The poet alluded to in the second poem, *Nocturne: Bright-cleanness (Ming-tsing)*, can not be named because of his ill-fated return to China. In the last two poems, *Unyielding-strength (Chien-pa)* and *Morning-freshness (T'süan-shuang)*, homage is paid to Ma Ling, master of brush-and-pine-soot-ink (*pi sung yen mo*) of the Sung period, and to Claude Gelée (*dit Lorrain*), master of pen-and-bistre of the Baroque period.]

Secret-genuineness (Shen-miao):

To wander silently,
Sketching corruption
Over a seal.

To set a seal on lips,
Unseared by hatred,
With a stroke.

To stretch the fragrant silk
Taut as new drumheads—
Unsounded.

To snare the last stone drum
With sealed inscriptions
For nightfall.

Nocturne: Bright-cleanness (Ming-tsing):

By the light of old moons and driftwood fires
We cast out our lines near weaving kelp beds,
Sounding clear waters for cabezón.

Then drank from the white crane's porcelain mouth
And savored to windward his fluted soughings—
Muted and deeper nearing the dregs.

Now quenching old embers a last swell foams,
As a lonely wildgoose soars down channel,
Setting his course by the evening star.

*Unyielding-strength (Chien-pa) near Mokulumne Hill in the
Mother Lode after the Great Snowfall of '51:*

Sabinian pines cling frozen to his pilfered slope—
Their needles splayed and porpentine,
Their cones despoiled.
Above him spoked and rimmed Sierran solitudes
Flash against a slate and pumice sky.

Beneath, a miner trudges behind a burro
Over a ramshackle wooden bridge.
But the Master Ma Ling labors no loads,
Scales no heights, plumbs no depths—
His thousand winters slowly thawing.

*Morning-freshness (T'süan-shuang) in the Arroyo de las Nueces
y Bolbones near Peachtree Springs:*

Before the sun rose up a titan against heaven,
Not even Turner would have dared essay
This foreground swale with seven ancient alders—
Apostate exiles from The Range of Light,
Gathering strength from Diablo's flanks
To bow before the eastern flame of summer.
Whose art, translucent to the filigraine,

But sunstruck Claude Lorrain's could stem this grove
With luminous prone shadows—living shades:
Phantoms with neither disposition
Nor dispensation ever to put on flesh
Or flourish beyond the water or the mark?

W. S. GRAHAM

Letter III

As Mooney's calls Time this moment
Amazed faces me with that
Face Love lashed and lashed
I love and wend me always
To death with. O my strayed dear,

Find me. I find you fairly
Wandered under every eye
Yet fondly near me among
Them all in all the harp-hung
Tara of the drinking time
And the drink talking. What a dark
Rush goes under it all
Here we inherit. We'll
Drink ourselves here face to face
A one for the road across
More than these words. Here's us,
And may tonight's nets stroll
Where the herring are. We'll see.
Come nearer to hear. He's high
Singing on the top and gallant
Grace-notes of his longing.
O you're tonight as first
As ever you were when I
Set eyes on you one summer

Gazing your younglashed eyes
On me and playing shyness
And torment, and then you even
Made me buttercup your chin
Clearly it seems no time.

There's nothing. Not anything
More. Love swells my tongue.
Let the signs start and peer
Us into light. We drift
Above fathoms that move
Their friendly thunders through
This breathless thoroughfare.
And never fear here under
The light of the brandished gale
Or Michael risen double
Sworded with the salt word
Reeking his tongue. Who hears?
Who sees us? Surely only
A drop or two of the spray
That the main deep may favour.

Mooney's called Closing and
Three standing men in a sculled
Boat brimming slowly the night-
Skinned harbour calms, move out
To the riding port and star
Board of their trade. Now let
The sail creak and talk
Over us and the light
Swing at the slow mast-head.
We shall lie held here
In the moving hull of Love
Face to face making
The perfect couple perfect.
So, under every eye,
Who shall we perish to?
Here it's endlessly us
Face to face across

The nine-waved and the berry-
Stained kiss of the moved sea.
And not one word we merge in
Here shall we unmarvel
From its true home. My dear,

Easy. We'll keep a good
Watch for the fresh on the salt
As the river moves through
In a stain of calm on the sea.

Easy. Move as I move
Through this breathless sea
Rended openly. The deck
Bleeds sudden fire and
The binnacle like a clutch
Of glow-worms glows. See.
This night moves and this language
Moves over slightly
To meet another's need
Or make another's need.

Move here. We'll choose inshore,
But that's not their concern.

EDGAR BOWERS

Elegy: for W. H.

My feeling is a posture where the sun
Warms with bright change my marble sleep, while I
Discover shade, oblivion, and death
Fixed in the head behind each carnal eye
And sink within the darkness which I am.
Knowledge is cold along the flowing nerve
Which moves the blood; touched by no will of mine,
Its masses stir through action from reserve.

The light streams as if perfect through my eyes,
Which only may perceive it on the grass
Where leaves distinguish quality with shade;
Or if I raise them, they become a mass
Of hawthorne blossoms where bees crawl and cling
Lightly in their instinctive ecstasy;
Or eyelids brush away both sun and shade
Of which I keep but their contingency.

Though passion after life may be concealed
In a marmoreal brooding, it is stirred
And shaded by some transitory thing,
As marble walls reflect a flying bird;
And though within my flesh I move untouched
By loss outside its pale security
And selfish care, the ways of knowledge hurt
As if they were the edge of flattery.

His nerves have left his figure loose, as mine
Must let it go and with it memories
So violent they dominate the sense,
Lest mind should settle like soft dust in trees
Where efforts of the will might stir its faint
Invisibility from leaf to leaf,
Pale membrane over matter in the sun,
Blurred by an imprecise and feral grief.

Our wisdom's face becomes mundane repose.
The head fallen back in agony, the eyes
Unseeing, and the whitened lips benumbed,
Distort the grieving figure from its guise,
Until the brain, achieving what is lost,
Assumes the living stone's integrity
And fluid sameness, line by elusive line
Of bitter, phidian serenity.

DONALD F. DRUMMOND

Nothing Is Worth

Nothing may give you more, and something less:
The raging at the door is nothingness,
Quiet is nothing, silence nothing, sleep,
And wisdom, and the confidence you keep

Are nothing only. Nothing never dies:
The ancient nothing swimming in your eyes
Has naught below it, naught beyond it, yet
It lingers when your body is regret,
Chemical names, and water. Let it be
Our only peace, the one last mystery
Beyond betrayal, venery, or love,
Oblivion beyond the need to prove,

Consolation for the loss of hope
And cushion for the needle of desire.

Flare then and vanish into the vast blue
Beyond the limits we can peer into,
Beyond the facts which we assert are true,
Beyond all devils, angels, and their fire.

R. W. FLINT

Faulkner as Elegist

IT IS A GOOD THING IN GENERAL to complement the several excellent studies of individual works of Faulkner's that have appeared recently with fresh overall treatment of his themes, to extend and deepen the principles of Faulkner criticism worked out by Robert Penn Warren in his indispensable essay.¹ Mr. Howe's book-length study² is by no means exhaustive in that regard, nor without what seems to me a certain schematic insensitivity to Faulkner's intentions. I approach Faulkner with a theory which I hope will go a certain way toward answering the objections of critics like Mr. Howe who often appear to be judging him by the standards of the novelists he suggests (or those, like James and George Eliot, against whom he stands in the most glaring contrast) rather than by his own standards. Briefly, I want to consider him as a poetic novelist.

That the novel has moved toward the condition of poetry as poetry itself has declined in prestige is by now a fairly widely recognized critical axiom. To apply it, however, to so robustly concrete a writer as Faulkner, himself an indifferent poet in conventional metres, may seem a particularly foolhardy venture. Criticism has come to think of poetry in fiction as, so to speak, the earned increment of the usual novelistic virtues, not as an added grace-note (in the best instances) nor as a sort of obliigate woven around the more solid and interesting material, but rather as something integral to it, its most precious essence. So, if one defines Faulkner as a poetic novelist in the tradition of Flaubert, Joyce and Lawrence, rather than Maeterlinck, Virginia Woolf or Thomas Wolfe, it is not to shirk the usual tasks of the critic of fiction. On the contrary. This is what makes the job so difficult; many vital considerations must be met before one can reach such a definition.

¹Review of Malcolm Cowley's Introduction to *The Portable Faulkner*, in *Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism*, edited by Frederick W. Hoffman and Olga Vickery. Michigan State College Press, 1951. The essays by William Poirier, Richard Chase and George Marion O'Donnell mentioned at points in my essay are also included in this valuable anthology which is unfortunately already seriously out of date.

²*William Faulkner: A Critical Study*, by Irving Howe, Random House, 1951.

At the same time, I think my view of Faulkner can help to clarify many of the problems which bother critics who treat him only as a "pure" novelist in the great moral tradition of English fiction, or, as one fashionable theory would have it, as only a brilliant episodic writer, a sort of "American Dickens" who derives his power from a species of pre-conscious collaboration with the destructive forces of his time. The "poetry" I want to demonstrate in my quoted touchstones should, if acknowledged as such, substantially justify many of the digressions which readers have found troublesome in his novels. It would do this by establishing a stylistic perspective, a hierarchy of styles, in fact, of varying weight and authority. But to proceed in terms of style alone would be to defeat my purpose; the great moments must be seen as a sublimation into affirmative statement of *everything* the fiction does, of every tone and theme it adopts.

Faulkner has been one of the most prolific adapters of style in modern literature. The height of his achievement, however, is like nothing else in fiction, a unique transformation of his special literary heritage as an American Southerner. No other novelist, in the act of reaching fairly austere heights of vision, has so often *seemed* to be floundering. His public poses of the coy amateur or the canny, folksy professional hack have kept his most serious audience at a distance; he is delighted to mislead whoever wants to be misled. And the tone of his public speeches, though appropriate enough in terms of the Yoknapatawpha chronicle, must strike anyone who does not know and love his work as somehow queer. I don't mean to imply by this that his Nobel Prize speech may not be inspiring to other novelists and laymen alike, but I am sceptical of its authority for the non-Faulknerian. Faulkner speaks mostly for himself, hardly at all for "us". He cannot help sounding like a "Faulkner character," a voice out of that world which rises like a volcanic island from beneath our usual plane of vision. Gavin Stevens notwithstanding, to extract any one philosophical formulation from this world as its essential message is no more than to bring back a flower or rare bird on the supposition that it adequately represents the island. This, I believe, is due to the superior weight of dramatic and poetic over merely intellectual realization in his work. He has a broad working philosophy of life but nowhere distills it out so that it can be examined apart from the fiction itself.

Faulkner's bardic tone is of the essence and no mere affectation: it is only superficially naive or neo-primitive. His elegiac tragic-comedy embraces what he chooses to regard as the decay of the institutionalized middle class wisdom on which James and George Eliot drew so heavily, towards which they had a more sanguine attitude (though James, I think, is also essentially an elegist of the international upper-middle class). We may perhaps not initially sympathize with Faulkner's attitude, especially in a writer himself from the middle class, but we will be the better readers for recognizing it as such.

It is no longer possible, therefore, to treat him as a fabulous *naïf*. On the contrary, the worst faults of his writing derive from a deliberate writing down, a mixing of tones and genres under too little pressure of vision. Then we can complain of his vulgarity and note his uncanny adroitness in meeting the *Saturday Evening Post* on its own ground, or his nervous asides to a false ideal of sophistication; for example, when he tells us that Eula Varner, in *The Hamlet*, is a "kaleidoscopic convolution of mammalian ellipses." This sort of thing belongs in the novels where verbal fanaticism and vulgarity are evoked only to be ironically reflected upon. But to describe vulgar, inarticulate people in a comic spirit, as he does in *The Hamlet*, one need not be vulgar oneself. I have more to say about this later. My point here is that Faulkner, in fact, is immensely professional and fairly careful to match the spirit of what his people say to their exact social status in Yoknapatawpha. His true naïveté is ambition in the most honorable sense.

The first thing one notices in Faulkner is the high proportion of mere activity to the small amount of decisive moral action. One can be easily fooled by this into supposing that there is no full-blooded moral action at all, that Faulkner is offering some final vision of nihilism, alienation and disaster. How preposterous this theory really is has already been several times demonstrated, most concretely by Cleanth Brooks³ and William Poirier in their convincing analyses of *Absalom, Absalom!* As a Southerner, writing at the moment when a regional culture is passing into legend but still available as such, Faulkner can be prodigiously

³"*Absalom, Absalom: The Definition of Innocence*", by Cleanth Brooks, in *The Sewanee Review* for Autumn, 1951.

inventive and a firm moral realist in the act of writing poetic novels which are elegiac in the larger perspective. Everything in his background and literary conditioning works towards this end. His genius, then, has been to define his *spirit* in the light of the tradition, to experiment freely, even to play the fool at times, without violating this spirit.

To come down to cases, I want to plunge *in medias res* with a discussion of the vexed question of the meaning of *Light in August*. Mr. Howe's analysis of this book seems to come a cropper over one or two small but crucial points. He feels that Hightower should somehow have saved Christmas from the crude justice inevitably due him as the part-negro murderer of Joanna Burden. The final form of this justice is excruciatingly painful, to be sure; but it *is* inevitable as Faulkner sees the world in this book. If you think of Hightower as really failing at this juncture, then the book does fall apart and is indeed inexplicable as a whole. Malcolm Cowley has called Christmas a "villain" and Richard Rovere has found him a focus of experience with no clear identity of his own. Both critics are certainly right in detail, but both miss the novel's rationale by a considerable margin. Whether or not Faulkner has read *The Idiot*, his practice in this book is similar to Dostoevsky's. Christmas's ordeal—sexual, racial, moral—is the action which unifies the story, the fundamental, unbreakable rhythm which draws the other people into a common act of judgment by which their world is clarified. The town of Jefferson is appreciably wiser and better when the ordeal is over, and Byron Bunch can marry Lena in a comic pastoral coda matching the lyric prelude of Lena's overland journey. The various Yoknapatawpherian fanaticisms of Hightower, the McEacherns, the Hineses, Joanna Burden and Percy Grimm are absorbed into the grimly successful effort of society to keep itself upright, ironically counterpointed against the greater, more inevitable suffering of Christmas.

Christmas and Hightower must be thought of together; their respective impoverishments are complementary views of a world in which action is radically divorced from thought. Hightower is the radically imperfect clergyman as Christmas is the radically imperfect "savior" and "martyr". Together, they sit in judgment, not on Christianity itself (Faulkner is too profound a re-

alist for that), but on the smug parochial certainties of organized religion. Both, on occasion, are driven from beyond themselves to deliver in the pulpit blasphemous parodies of the Gospel. But Hightower, on the other hand, in the mere act of recognizing Christmas's plight and sheltering him for as long as he could, and by helping Lena as a result of the crisis thereby brought to a head, sees his human duty towards society at large for the first time and gladly performs it at the risk of further disgrace. Far from relapsing into senile indifference, as Mr. Howe claims, he has emerged from romantic confusion, public disgrace and a botched marriage to the point where he can act according to his professed principles. I need hardly add that for him to have sacrificed himself to stop the lynching, which even the upright sheriff was unwilling to attempt, would have made *Light in August* a quite different novel. That would be Ike McCaslin's sort of heroism, not Hightower's, and would demand a quite different mythical context. On the mythical level, *Light in August* is uniquely a "passion", but any ultimate analogy with Christ ends there. Christmas, as criminal and scapegoat, is clearly meant to atone for all the sins practiced against him, not, indeed, as a "saint of the underworld" nor as a scapegoat alone, but as a warning memory for future times, "of itself alone serene, of itself alone triumphant." We can assent to Faulkner's faith in the value of this example: "They are not to lose it in whatever peaceful valleys, beside whatever placid and reassuring streams of old age, in the mirroring faces of whatever children they will contemplate old disasters and newer hopes." In this impeccably firm rhetoric, Faulkner is surely the very opposite of hopeless; its tone implies that everyone has experienced some sort of catharsis. As a matter of fact, as Mr. Howe admits, the novel is full of a radiant sense of human possibility, of an imaginative gusto even in the extremes of Doc Hines's crazy evangelism, and of a lyric feeling for nature. Christmas is returned to the justice of Yoknapatawpha as Myshkin is returned to the bosom of 19th century Russia. Hightower, in the meantime, recognizes his obsession with the past for what it is, and in so doing, is granted an elegiac vision that is one of the chief splendors of Faulkner's art.

From here I must return to some further generalizations about the fiction at large. Suffering is protean and universal in Faulk-

ner, the possibilities of intellectual or spiritual heroism relatively few. From beginning to end, his people are radically defeated in their efforts to reach some safe intellectual vantage-point outside the action. One could even claim that it is "mind" itself, in the Aristotelian or Jamesian definitions, which plays the role of tragic hero. Faulkner's defeated heroes are an analogue to the integrity of his fiction as elegiac vision. They remain upright in the reader's mind. We honor Quentin Compson's tenacity if we don't grant him the dignity of a Hamlet. None of them are Hamlets or Christs or Captain Veres or Chillingworths or even Marcells or Stephen Dedaluses. Something more than their respective wisdoms is required to account for Faulkner's sanity; and this, I believe, is the incantatory meditation which emerges from the great moments of action. At the highest level, this is the "mind" which the fiction itself makes. It is weighted with overtones of florid Southern speechmaking, of Cicero, Byron and Sir Walter Scott, but it is also thoroughly original and unromantic, stiffened by Faulkner's classic sense of affairs, his tragic view of life. Loose, rolling, bardic, it is also a gathering into "poetry" of the novel's main concerns, a tender celebration of the values released in the action. Faulkner's vision is a sort of improvised Platonism, a world in which certain, not ideas in the antithetical Hegelian sense but ideals in the Kantian sense, subsistent *realities*, such as honor, courtesy, fidelity, integrity and love, are embodied and recognized only in action.

Unless, therefore, one is referring to this "poetry", I think one must admit that action in Faulkner is always more finished and compelling, more acceptable as a large version of reality, than the opinions of his people about the meaning of their lives. His profusion of folkish apothegms is part of his fiction's secondary texture, a means whereby his people keep themselves going. Even the garrulous Gavin is no more than *primus inter pares* in point of authority. The voice of "Faulkner himself" whipping up a froth of epithets, forcing home an emphasis, overloading something or other with symbolic weight, is usually an ironic feature, the extension of some quirk in his characters, often serving to reflect ironically on the slow, calm gathering of the main crisis. As Mr. Warren has observed, Faulkner is not primarily a humorist, though humor is part of his given material; in a subdued way

(compared to Twain or Dickens) he is highly proficient at it. But in *The Hamlet*, his nearest approach to pure humor, he cannot restrain himself from attributing a metaphysical superabundance of evil to his characters which gives the humor a bitter edge. The Varners and Snopeses, like Miss Reba and her crew in *Sanctuary*, are believable only in the long Faulknerian perspective. But when he relieves the epic tone of *Go Down, Moses* with the misadventures of Uncle Buck and Buddy, or Lucas Beauchamp's quiet fleeing of the Northern salesman, proportion is kept. For Faulkner's vision to condense itself out, he needs to make extensive excursions "downward" into humor and vulgarity, outward into epic action, and "upward" into legend. One can also discover subsidiary plays of pure physical quality, as Richard Chase has traced the play of "round" and "straight" ideas in *Light in August*, and a rough metaphysic of culture, as George Marion O'Donnell has broken the fiction down into a "Snopes world" and a "Sartoris World". The lesser novels, like *The Unvanquished* or *Sartoris*, set too exclusively in the past, or like *Pylon*, *The Wild Palms*, *Soldier's Pay*, *Intruder in the Dust*, or *Sanctuary* too exclusively in the present, hamper Faulkner's contrapuntal play of legend and fact. Critics are always finding neglected interest in these books, and rightly so, for nothing Faulkner has written is without touches of his genius. But they are set on too shallow a stage and the action is correspondingly shallow. (*As I Lay Dying*, I think, is the one clear exception to this rule.) Popeye's ghastly corn-shuck or the details of Charlotte's abortion are too violently forced outward, as symbols, against the modern world at large. (The books about the past are relatively temperate and delightful, but minor Faulkner nonetheless.)

Within Yoknapatawpha's boundaries, most of the classic themes of Western fiction are rehearsed: rites of initiation and passage, the quest, the curse, bloodguilt, incest and parricide, the comic journey, hubris and nemesis, sacrifice and atonement, the idyll and the vendetta, crime and punishment. Having said as much, one reflects, after all, how cool and small the world remains, clustered about its court-house square, presided over by the great court-house clock which begins to haunt the novels as far back as *Soldier's Pay*.

It is immensely shock-absorbent in its warm-blooded lyric

negroes, its salty, shiftless poor-whites, its sturdy farmers, lawyers and sheriffs. One can enjoy the novels without responding to their mythical overtones at all. The only element they obviously lack is Jamesian love-making and the Jamesian heroine. Faulkner handled it tentatively in *Soldier's Pay* but soon recognized its uselessness for his fiction except as legend. In *Absalom, Absalom!* he invokes the glamor of the legend in the act of cutting it down to size. Sutpen is a warped realist but his son Henry, born into money but without family status, like Miss Rosa the minister's daughter, is a puritanical romantic, glamorizing what he cannot possess. Charles Bon and the parties at Sutpen's Hundred have a specious glamor for Henry and Miss Rosa, an illusion for which they suffer bitterly.

Faulkner's vision can rise to poetry because it is both aware of the principal modern ideologies and able to make good use of them for what they are worth. His portrait of Sutpen, the human analogue to Old Ben the bear as Melville's Ahab is the human analogue to Moby Dick, has a massive reality which puts it beyond the reach of the clichés of literary Marxism. Sutpen is certainly a prime exploiter of the masses, but in so far as he reenacts the American ideal of the self-made man in its innocence, the masses gladly cooperate with him. He is finally defeated by his arrogant inhumanity. If Marxists wish to draw a lesson from that, they are welcome, but it is proletarian only in the sense that all great art is proletarian. Arrogance is no monopoly of a class. As James deals tragically with the ironies of progressive reformism in Olive Chancellor of *The Bostonians*, so Faulkner deals with it in the meeting of Joe Christmas with Miss Burden, the transplanted New England "nigger-lover". That Christmas's ordeal should work itself out in specifically sexual terms is another instance of Faulkner's fruitful awareness of a powerful modern ideology. Sex, in Faulkner as in James, is a great coercive force, not in itself either good or evil.

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I have been far from exhaustive in relating my leading ideas to the fiction in detail, but I must get on to some closer definitions of his method. A critic has suggested that Ike McCaslin

of "The Bear" be taken as the spokesman of a new note of hope in Faulkner, a "new testament" to relieve the gloom of the old. Partial as I am to new testaments, I must agree with W. R. Moses⁴ that this is a rather special-pleading theory. To be sure, Ike survives his rites of the wilderness a wiser and better man, but his life, his spiritual growth, stops exactly there. It would be highly patronizing to assume that Faulkner's does also. In the rest of *Go Down, Moses*, Ike is no more than an amiably cranky offshoot of a clan dominated by old Carothers McCaslin in the past and by Lucas Beauchamp, the mulatto, in the present. Ike breaks off, after the end of the hunting, into a visionary world of his own, no more and no less "hopeful" than Faulkner's other visionary worlds. But the passage in "Delta Autumn" in which Ike summons up the past ought to be quoted:

He seemed to see the two of them—himself and the wilderness—as coevals, his own span as a hunter, a woodsman, not contemporary with the first breath but transmitted to him, assumed by him gladly, humbly, with joy and pride, from that old Major de Spain and that old Sam Fathers who had taught him to hunt, the two spans running out together, not toward oblivion, nothingness, but into a dimension free of both time and space where once more the untreed land warped and wrung to mathematical squares of rank cotton for the frantic old-world people to turn into shells to shoot at one another, would find ample room for both—the names, the faces of the old men he had known and loved and for a little while outlived, moving again among the shades of tall unaxed trees and sightless brakes where the wild strong immortal game ran forever before the tireless belling immortal hounds, falling and rising phoenix-like to the soundless guns.

It is altogether splendid,—controlled, firm and affirmative, without allowing us to forget, after all, that McCaslin is something of a crank. My second such touchstone is spoken by Miss Rosa in the middle of *Absalom, Absalom!*:

That was I, I was there; something of me walked in measured cadence with the measured tread of Jones and his companion, and Theophilus McCaslin who had heard the news somehow back in town, and Clytie, as we bore the awkward and unmanageable box past the stair's close turning while Judith, following, steadied it from behind, and so down and out to the wagon; something of me stood beside the gashy earth in

⁴W. R. Moses, a note on "The Bear" in *Accent* for Winter, 1953.

the cedar's sombre gloom and heard the clumsy knell of clods upon the wood and answered No when Judith at the grave's mounded end said, 'He was a Catholic. Do any of you know how Catholics. . . .' and Theophilus McCaslin said 'Catholic be damned; he was a soldier. And I can pray for any Confedrit soldier' and then cried in his old man's shrill harsh loud cacophonous voice: 'Yaay, Forrest! Yaay, John Sartoris! Yaaaaaay!' And something walked with Judith and Clytie back across the sunset field and answered in some curious serene suspension to the serene quiet voice which talked of plowing corn and cutting winter wood, and in the lamplit kitchen helped this time to cook a meal and helped to eat it too within the room beyond whose ceiling he no longer lay, and went to bed (yes, took a candle from that firm untrembling hand and thought 'She did not even weep' and then in a lamp-gloomed mirror saw my own face and thought 'Nor did you either') within that house where he had sojourned for another brief (and this time final) space and left no trace of him, not even tears. Yes. One day he was not. Then he was. Then he was not.

Again we have the rolling, fulsome periods towards a moment of strong emphasis, the single occasion when Miss Rosa willingly gives herself up to a larger interest and sees the world as it is. "Measured cadence", "sombre gloom", "awkward and unmanageable", "firm untrembling", "gashy", "knell" and "sojourn" betray the spinster contributor of odes and elegies to the local newspapers. As an isolated piece of prose, it could hardly be offered as the model of anything except Faulkner's uniquely poignant Virgilian rhetoric (Virgilian in its tone rather than its form). The romantic dream is gone: winter, work, loyalty, competence and order remain.

If these are the most memorable episodes in Faulkner, his other styles need not compete with them for authority. Nor do they. Either they are plainly narrative, distorted to suggest some distortion of spirit (the famous "fallacy of expressive form" which is, needless to say, very far from fallacious when not overdone) or they are elliptical and allusive, as in the well-known and perhaps overestimated Benjy monologue in *The Sound and the Fury* (whose incoherence stands in lyric-ironic contrast to the heightened prose of the superb Easter scene in the middle of the book). Faulkner will often establish a familiar fictional tone and then go on to undermine it: "Not this, nor this, nor this, nor even this,

but *that!*" thus cutting his way down through layers of conventional expectations, making fun of them as he demolishes them (a device which goes to seed in some later novels when he has nothing very important to reveal and no strong expectations to baffle). In *Absalom, Absalom!* as he successively undermines Miss Rosa's romantic egotism, Jason's romantic amorality, Bon's truculent fatalism, Shreve's callow distaste and even Quentin's bitter tenacity, to mention only the principal "voices" of the novel, the prose makes a steady circling motion, chipping away at the expectations his characters arouse. *Then*, indeed, after many excursions and ambushes, when we have finally arrived at the tragic gate which Judith symbolically holds open and Henry closes and the novel's main action is completed, it ceases to be pseudo-gothic and becomes gothic in earnest, in the long closing coda. This, I think, is what makes it such a haunting study of a particular ethos. Life has a way of imitating bad fiction, Faulkner implies. You can have your romantic embroidery and your gothic coda if you take the story seriously. Otherwise both will be intolerable.

I should mention one further feature of his method; his scrambling of time-sequences to provide a closer play of suggestion and analogy, a feature on which modern criticism, with its Joyce-Eliot-and-Pound-begotten avidity for puzzles, has perhaps too exclusively pounced. (Conrad Aiken's pioneering essay makes too much of a jocular mystery out of Faulkner's style, missing its Virgilian center.) Faulkner has nowhere suggested so radical a cyclical view of history as *Finnegans Wake*; but one remembers the turning wheel in Hightower's meditation, the cycles of the hunt, of planting and harvest, the ceaseless journeys of his people back and forth in time and space. Sometimes the analogy prepares us for the rest of the story, as in the following:

From a little after two o'clock until almost sundown of the long still hot weary dead September afternoon they sat in what Miss Coldfield still called the office because her father had called it that—a dim hot airless room with the blinds all closed and fastened for forty-three successive summers because when she was a girl someone had said that light and moving air carried heat and that dark was always cooler, and which (as the sun shone fuller and fuller on that side of the house) became latticed with yellow slashes full of dust motes which Quentin thought of as being flecks of the dead old dried paint itself blown inward from the scaling blinds as the wind might have blown them.

This threatening sense of festering energy sets the ground-rhythm of the book. One can claim, I think that the novel takes place between "two o'clock" and "sundown" in the history of Faulkner's world, that the house is Miss Rosa herself, that the steadily beating sun is Sutpen's growing interest in her (Mr. Poirier has admirably demonstrated how Sutpen and Miss Rosa complement each other) and the motes are glints of truth from the past which the "wind" of her passion blows into sight from the "scaling blinds" of her vision as she approaches the disinterestedness of death. Faulkner's fiction, made up as it is of a great many inter-related styles and techniques, deserves to be called thoroughly composed, *durchkomponiert*, as the Germans say of music, not only in what it presents but in what it suggests.⁵ Each of the four or five great novels is radically different from the others on the surface, but in each he is doing the same kind of thing. It is neither romance nor allegory nor symbolic drama in the traditional meaning of those terms, but plain novelistic fiction with a poetic dimension, a distinguished episode of high tragi-comedy in Western art.

⁵From the large body of critical writing on Faulkner published after the Hoffman-Vickery anthology, I would single out essays by Cleanth Brooks, Carvel Collins, and Lawrance Thompson on various aspects of *The Sound and the Fury* (*English Institute Essays*—1952, Columbia University Press, 1954) as particularly lucid and illuminating. William Van O'Connor's *The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner* (University of Minnesota Press, 1954) I found rich in information but somewhat timid and conventional in judgment. Irving Howe's book, in spite of its habit of ragging Faulkner for not being more of an Arnoldian liberal, remains the best general introduction, as Robert Penn Warren's essay is the most solid and penetrating critique.

WILLIAM BECKER

Broadway: Classics and Imports

FOR THE LAST COUPLE OF DECADES, BROADWAY'S RELATION to the classical repertoire and to imports of European plays has been peculiarly defensive. Pugnaciously in the thirties and by default in the forties, Broadwayites tended to argue the superior energy of an indigenous dramatic product; and people whose thinking was largely conditioned by those periods even now are given to making attacks on the "snobbery" of critics who derive their standards either from European experience, or a classical education, or both. (John Gassner, prompted by some articles of mine in this magazine, made a whole series of such attacks in *Theatre Arts* just last year.) Yet the fact remains, as I recently tried to show here, that current American playwriting is getting more and more inept by traditional standards—and not, apparently, out of any conscious rebellion against those traditions, but only, or so it seems, from a general and largely enforced ignorance of them. In such circumstances, a counter-reaction was surely inevitable; and there are signs that the most tentative beginning of it may already have set in. For while the new American mood play seems to be enjoying a minor vogue among producers' playreaders (the public, God bless it, has demonstrated at least that it knows when it is bored), there has also been a marked increase during the past season in both classics and imports.

This increase is evidenced not merely by the productions to be reviewed here (and a couple of others still to come), but by a general undercurrent of activity on Broadway. During this past winter, the Producers' Theatre has been formed around a unique financial structure which permits it to finance its own productions out of its own treasury without having to rely on the caprices of outside "angels", and to mount these productions in theatres which it controls. The result is an organization able to consider long-range projects, compelled to stand on its own taste, and relieved of much of the frenzied hunting after a single new script which has normally characterized the Broadway production office. A second innovation of this season has been the founding of the Phoenix Theatre, an off-Broadway venture in a Broadway size house, and utilizing first-class Broadway talents. The Phoenix has committed itself to the production of old and modern classics, and plays which, for one reason or another, would not normally be done on Broadway itself. There is, further, the American Shakespeare Festival Theatre, a project announced long ago, but which has only this winter been assured of fulfillment by a substantial contingent grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. In addition, there are at least two groups of important professional actors on Broadway who have recently begun to gather on their own time to read and rehearse Shakespeare. There

even seems to be a growing realization that the standard forms of acting training in New York, which derive from (some would say, which pervert) Stanislavsky's "Method", have left a sizable proportion of our younger actors unfit for anything but tough American realism—a situation rendered plainly ironical by the current shortages. Nothing has yet been proved by all this activity, but even as an indication, it is sufficiently widespread and consistent in its implications to demand notice.

The unfortunate thing is that it is still possible for a prominent American writer like Randall Jarrell to be quoted in *The New York Times* as saying: "If I lived in France, I'd write plays. But if you like Chekhov over Broadway comedy, you don't get much encouragement here." Perhaps not. But it is clear that if an important segment of Broadway is genuinely intending to make a fuller use of classic and foreign repertoires, several crucial auxiliary jobs will have to be undertaken—some of which will require the best talents of trained literary intellectuals like Mr. Jarrell. One, as the past season authoritatively displayed, is translation: for in nothing as in the difficulty of translation is the complexity of drama as a literary form revealed. A large part of the resistance one meets on Broadway, in respect of the European repertoire, is due to the hack-work in translation with which up to now we have had to make do. A second need is for an informed dramatic criticism of a practical sort: there are as of now almost no standards by which interpreters on Broadway can discipline or judge their work. A third and perhaps corollary need is for a broadened training in theatrical craft, by means of which an actor's body may be rendered a fit instrument and his mind a reasonably useful interpretative device. In part, at least, this will mean an intellectual discipline which no existing dramatic school in New York is presently prepared to offer. If Broadway has failed to encourage Mr. Jarrell, it may also be pertinent to ask to what extent Mr. Jarrell has succeeded in encouraging Broadway? Or even to what extent he has tried? Alienation implies its own form of philistinism.

I

For me the profoundest—and the most unexpected—disappointment of the season was Jean Anouilh's *Mademoiselle Colombe*, which ran for just 61 performances at the Longacre Theatre, losing \$70,000 for its backers, and probably banishing Anouilh from Broadway for some time to come: it was his fifth straight flop in New York. It was said last year that, in view of what had previously happened to his plays here, Anouilh intended to withhold all further rights for Broadway until he could be assured of a fully first-class production. This production, in the abstract, must have seemed blessed with exceptional benefits. For it was directed by Harold Clurman and designed by Boris Aronson: both as highly gifted in their fields as Broadway can furnish.

It starred Julie Harris and Edna Best; and its supporting cast, headed by Eli Wallach, was almost entirely made up of reliable and highly reputable performers. An English version of the play was specially prepared for this production by Louis Kronenberger. Anouilh had every right to be impressed. Yet something went catastrophically wrong: this mountain of prestige labored and brought forth—not a mouse, but a cheap, misshapen little monstrosity too amorphous even to be named. Anouilh's *Colombe* was not interpreted, nor even in any reliable sense, adapted. It was transformed, vulgarized, and brow-beaten into something that not merely had none of Anouilh's distinction, but had substituted no real quality of its own. Unfortunately, for the critic, a production like this one disarms criticism by its very senselessness. For when first-class talents conspire to create such a shambles, the sin is somehow original, and it is better to blame either God or the producers: the natural anonymity of both positions being such as to provide the fullest immunity.

Yet one can begin with the adaptation. And the first thing to be said is that Anouilh is not, linguistically, a difficult playwright to translate. His prose is polished and often decorative, but on the whole it makes for a reasonably straightforward French. Unlike Giraudoux, to take an extreme case, Anouilh is not primarily distinguished by those subtle literary effects which only a complex and highly special language can provide. His concern is more immediately *theatrical*; and though this makes him a less good writer than Giraudoux, it also makes him a more fully dramatic craftsman. He has an extraordinary command of dramatic rhythm which expresses itself in the movement of his actions, in the echoes and re-echoes, the parallelisms, the precise way in which things are paced, the contrasts, the builds and snaps—in short, in all the dynamics of dramatic structure. His plays are therefore chiefly distinguished by an intense vitality of theatrical form, which has nothing to do with the language as such. What poses the major problem for a translator is the necessity of shortening them for Broadway—in its own way, at least as bewildering a problem as the language of a Giraudoux. It is not only that French audiences love the theatre enough to sit in it for three hours, but that the traditional speed of French acting and delivery is half again as fast as American actors have been trained to manage (or American audiences to follow). There is, of course, a sense in which the very nature of Anouilh's drama makes it impossible to cut; just as Giraudoux is, in a sense, untranslatable. But degrees of success in both are possible, provided the translator really recognizes and applies himself to the relevant problem. It was more than clear that Mr. Kronenberger simply missed the point.

Nor was there any reason for those who commissioned the translation, had they been competent to appraise the kind of talent Mr. Kronenberger has, to suppose that he would have grasped it. In all his years as a drama critic and essayist, he has never given any evidence of understanding what, in Anouilh's theatrical sense, plays are all about: his recent book-length study of English

comic tradition (*The Tbread of Laughter*), wherever it is more than clever and graceful verbiage, is a book about manners, not about plays. As theatre criticism, it is hopelessly fey, and consistently peripheral. On the other hand, Kronenberger is one of the few modern American intellectuals who has made a deliberate attempt to write "stylish" prose. As critic for *Time* magazine, he has made himself a master of that smart-aleck American idiom known as Timesese. As a scholar of eighteenth century literature, he has often attempted to write modern prose with a witty Johnsonian balance. These preoccupations have together worked to produce a sort of popinjay polish which is effective and often amusing; but they have also apparently managed to ruin his perception of larger literary values. The result is that as a writer, he seems to undertake composition as a matter of sentence concoction, in the same way that, as a critic, he appears to understand dramaturgy only insofar as it has something to do with witty conversations that illuminate social mores. What literary inclinations could have been less well calculated to serve the interpreting of Anouilh, I cannot imagine; but then most of Broadway probably has yet to discover that the commissioning of a translation is an editorial act, for which the willy-nilly literary enthusiasms of the Broadway Intelligentsia are insufficient preparation.

The fundamental dramatic gesture in *Colombe* is a simple one; yet on the clarity of its exposition depend in high degree all the corollary effects of the play. What became of it in this production will serve to show how thoroughly Mr. Kronenberger (abetted subsequently by the director and cast) managed to hack the play into pointlessness. This gesture utilizes an ironic flashback at the end of the play, for which Anouilh very carefully calculated his preparation. In the opening scene, an earlier piece of action is recapitulated in the dialogue: the events are related of the day on which Colombe first came to the theatre as a flower-girl to deliver some flowers to Madame Alexandra; and we learn how Colombe was offered a part in the forthcoming production, how Julien, Madame Alexandra's bitterly idealistic son, caused a row and kicked Madame Alexandra's poet in the rear for enquiring after the shape of Colombe's legs, and finally how Julien fell in love with Colombe on the spot and persuaded her to run off with him. These events are related as Julien and Colombe are waiting, more than a year later, to see Madame Alexandra at the theatre: Julien has been called for military service, and they intend to ask her to look after Colombe and their baby while he is away. This opening scene is all made very clear, and very detailed, with the express purpose of establishing the image of that previous episode as precisely as possible in the audience's mind. For it is this previous episode which is enacted as the flashback which ends the play. Meanwhile, however, in the intervening acts, we have watched Colombe fall giddily into the life of the theatre which so offends Julien's maniacal puritanism; we have seen her deceive Julien in an off-hand manner with his own brother; and finally we have been subjected to a brutal scene in which Julien's

profoundly acidulous idealism confronts Colombe's innocent and easy-going sensuality. The story ends as Colombe, after confessing both her infidelity and her continuing love for Julien, goes unconcernedly off to a theatrical party, leaving Julien alone and broken, their marriage at an end. But the play does not end here, for there is still the flashback in Julien's embittered memory of that first day with Colombe. In Anouilh's play, the last few moments of this final scene, the events of which are already known to the audience, build up to a swell of soft romantic emotion which is climaxed as Colombe and Julien pledge themselves to each other "forever". At that moment, with all the ironic force of the preceding acts undercutting the sentiment in a powerful dramatic image, the curtain falls, and the play is over.

In the Kronenberger version, this special rhythm was destroyed in two ways. In the first place, all the clarity and finesse of the opening dialogue is missing from his play: the description of that first day is so heavily cut that no real image is ever impressed on the audience. The result was that the last scene could not be sustained in any important degree by rhythmic echoes, and all the rich effects which derive from having described an action before showing it were foregone. In the second place, the highly romantic tone of the play's last few moments was dispensed with altogether: there was no swell of sentiment, but, in its place, only a small crescendo of bumptious adolescent exuberance which climaxed as Julien and Colombe skipped gaily across the stage, with Julien shouting, "Now the story begins!" The irony was thereby not only severely diminished, but quite altered in quality. Anouilh's irony which recalled a whole tradition of romantic pathos in the theatre, suggested in Kronenberger only a very modern, ugly, and dramatically pointless futility. And in being less theatrical, it was also less persuasively real.

Given such a script (and it was no less inept in smaller ways than in this large one), Mr. Clurman and his cast probably cannot accurately be held responsible for what ensued; but it cannot be argued, either, that they did much to replace in the production the rhythm and spirit which Mr. Kronenberger destroyed in the text. In fact, licensed apparently by the pointlessness of the text, the production seemed to go off in all directions at once. The play was acted in half a dozen conflicting styles, none of which would have been correct for Anouilh. All the three major roles are full of natural human contradictions which reflect the general "both/and" quality of the play: Colombe is both naïve and worldly, both pure and sensual; Julien's idealism is warped and misdirected yet has true values on its side; Madame Alexandra is a rich comic portrait of one of those apparently schizoid grand ladies of the stage, like Mrs. Patrick Campbell who, as Yeats once described her, could in private life hunt her monkey and her servant with equal fury about the house, while to her devoted public she seemed the perfect embodiment of Maeterlinck's selfless heroines. Yet none of the three principals conveyed anything like the fullness of these subtle balances. Julie Harris came closest—but largely by

relying on her own personality and established mannerisms, which happen to be very nearly ideal for any number of Anouilh heroines (one day she should play *Leocadia* in a faithful production). But not even she could recapture what was not in the text or the direction, and she was in addition badly dragged down by Eli Wallach, who played Julien in an incredibly amateurish way for an actor of such well-proved talents. The performance was an extreme example of what might be called Actors Studio badness: it turned Julien into a plain *méchant*, disagreeable, neurotic, and weak, beneath a veneer of New York tough guy, complete with slouch and poor diction. The role was not in any sense *performed*, and Mr. Wallach's warped reaching after what nowadays sometimes passes for "truth" was grotesquely inadequate to convey the queer ambiguous personality (meant to be a counterpart of Colombe's ambiguity) Anouilh had drawn. As for Edna Best as Madame Alexandra, it can only be said that she threw away the rich role indicated above by reducing it to farce on the level of the minor characters in the play. These minor characters are meant to be satirical and crude (and they were well played); they are stock theatre types precisely to set off the humanity of the principals. But Madame Alexandra is not one of them: she is meant to be humorous in a deeper way, and even becomes from time to time the *raisonneur* of Anouilh's romantic view of the world as impossibly corruptive.

Mademoiselle Colombe would not have been worth worrying over at such length, had it not betrayed so exactly the most typical Broadway failures in respect of importations (and, by extension, many classics). There was, primarily, the ignorant translation. There was beneath that the lack of understanding of a whole tradition of theatre (i.e. the *critical* failing). And perhaps most dishearteningly, there was in evidence the real inadequacy of our currently most favored school of acting to deal with material outside its own narrow limits, or even to equip actors with that sense of *performance* ("style" being a somewhat ruined word in this context) which the great traditions of European theatre demand—even into our own time.

II

Of the Phoenix Theatre's production of *Coriolanus*, directed by John Houseman, little need be said. Little, in fact, *can* be said: for although this production probably had a good deal to recommend it in a relative sense, the title role was so pathetically miscast that it became exceedingly difficult to determine what had actually gone into the production as a whole. One felt that no Shakespearean play, and least of all a virtuoso piece like *Coriolanus*, could have survived Robert Ryan—a Hollywood actor who, for all his effective work in films, quite plainly had little gift for the traditional stage, and no training for it whatever. The power of *Coriolanus* rests largely in the delicate ambiguity of its central controversy, in the nearly Shavian way in which the arguments

and emotional appeals on both sides are equally weighted, and in fact that the gigantic figure of Coriolanus himself mirrors this double-edgedness with the most subtle precision. What this means is simply that the actor who takes on Coriolanus, the role, in effect takes on *Coriolanus*, the play; and the problem is made more complex in America by the fact that there is no automatic emotional response in behalf of heroism and aristocratic *arété* to which one can appeal. The better part of American life explicitly condemns such responses, and our stage tradition has faithfully reflected that condemnation (hence the "domesticated" Shakespeare which Margaret Webster likes to give us). The result is that Coriolanus is very likely, unless some insistent counteraction is introduced, to seem little more than an ugly snob, reminding one, perhaps more than anything else, of an eccentric sport like General MacArthur. A director has therefore to stack his cards slightly in favor of Coriolanus, if Shakespeare's careful balance is to be protected; and this Mr. Houseman could not have done had he wanted to.

So far as the rest of the production was concerned, there are several more or less general observations to be made. One is that Houseman is fast becoming the theatrical profession's chosen candidate to succeed Margaret Webster as *arbiter elegantiarum* with respect to American Shakespeare production. He has as yet given us too little (two productions in five years, both unsuccessful) by which to judge whether this is a promise or a threat. But certain virtues—relative, at any rate, to Miss Webster's frumpish methods—made themselves felt in *Coriolanus*. The most notable was that Houseman filled his minor roles with very competent and apparently well-trained young actors. The one really fine scene in the play was a comic vignette, obviously worked up outside the general rehearsals, performed by Gene Saks, Jack Klugman, and Jerry Stiller as three Volscian servants. It was lucid and fast, and it had a physical vitality rare anywhere on Broadway, most of all in Shakespeare where it is often most needed: nothing of this sort could conceivably have come out of the Margaret Webster stable of lame nags. Perhaps as a result of this care over the minor roles, the crowd scenes in this *Coriolanus* were vastly superior to any I have seen in previous Shakespeare productions here: there was none of Miss Webster's phony pageantry, and none of that pointless stationing of actors which in stock theatrical parlance is usually called "dressing the stage". I do not mean to suggest that the crowd scenes were especially exciting or spectacular in the manner of Guthrie in England or Vilar in France—such things are departures from a point we have yet to reach—but they were entirely competent, they had a refreshing theatrical reality, and they were visually interesting. Most important, they seemed to evidence the kind of directoral care on which all good things in theatre are ultimately dependent: interpretation is the next step, but in that regard *Coriolanus* had nothing to reveal.

Many of the incidental (but by no means inconsequential) faults of the production—the mixture of the styles and accents, the poor diction, the uneasiness

with which costumes were handled, the awkward physical bearings of many performers, even the cliché rostra of Donald Oenslager's pointlessly abstract set—were nobody's fault in particular. They are simply the product of a general neglect and inexperience, the failure of a whole milieu, the cross which all Shakespeare production in this country inevitably has to bear. There is no way to correct them short of altering the general conditions and preoccupations of acting training on Broadway, the ideal alteration being a sizable and steady increase in the sheer amount of Shakespeare performed—which would have the result of training not only actors, but audiences as well. It has taken the British fifty years of continual and determined activity, the developmental lines of which are quite traceable, to bring their Shakespeare productions to the peak of brilliance represented today by the Memorial Theatre at Stratford. The American Shakespeare Festival Theatre, now under organization and modeled on Stratford, may eventually provide this country with a sufficient bulk of Shakespearean production to make that kind of development possible. One cannot, however, look forward with much enthusiasm to the inevitable birth pangs of such a development; and it is perhaps to be hoped that chauvinism will not make us too proud to import, from time to time, directors and designers trained at Stratford, on the same principle that leads countries which are backward in technological respects to import proficient American engineers. Under the best of circumstances, a good many events will have to be endured before even a few are capable of giving us unqualified satisfaction.

III

The biggest hit—and yet in a peculiar way the most controversial one—of the past season has been the Playwrights Company's production of Giraudoux' *Ondine* at the Forty-Sixth Street Theatre. It has been controversial in the sense that, for a solid hit, a truly amazing number of people have disliked it intensely—and for extremely various reasons. Nor has the reaction been divided along usual lines: it is not a question of the ordinary public enjoying it and the cognoscenti not, or vice-versa; all degrees of both categories can be found in either camp. The production seems either to have caught the spectator's fancy or left him flatly untouched. In the response as a whole, there appears to be a startling lack of in-betweenness.

The paradox is that there are a great many in-between things about the production. Maurice Valency's version is one. Though on the whole less vulgarized and more literal than his previous Giraudoux adaptations, it nonetheless remains an entirely undistinguished affair (no worse, however, and in some respects better, than the "authorized" Schuyler Watts version, for which impressive claims have been made in some circles). Valency's work does not, like Kronenberg's *Colombe*, pervert or contradict the original; but it does seem only to parallel it at a distance, a thin and devitalized shadow, with all the explosive

concentration of Giraudoux's language gone flat and ordinary. In the peculiar, abstract, and somewhat dehumanized dramatic world which Giraudoux's plays express, it is largely the nobility and power of the language which make the action vital and give it an empathic reality. Subtract that quality of language, and (in *Ondine* at any rate) a good many technical faults of craftsmanship press into view, leaving inadequate pieces of action to accomplish poorly what Giraudoux had depended on his language to accomplish with superb finesse. But in this case, genteel mediocrity is at least more tolerable than audacious vulgarity; and that small consolation Valency has been able, for once, to provide us. It remains no less pressing, however, that somebody undertake, for the future's sake, to hoist Valency off poor Giraudoux's back.

The general circumstances of the production were also more in-between than positively good or bad. Alfred Lunt, who directed, apparently aimed at being very "stylish", but succeeded chiefly in being rather amateurishly fancy. Style, in its present ruined Broadway meaning, is the catch-all word which indicates any undefined (and usually somewhat la-dee-da) opposition to the prevailing vocabulary of realism: insofar as it means anything demonstrable, it stands for artificiality of any quality or degree as a legitimate end in itself. As in Lunt's work on *Ondine*, the result is usually a certain amount of posturing, a more extravagant use of gesture, a delivery which is calculatedly artificial, a certain self-conscious balleticism of movement—all of which may add up to something charming, or may merely look absurd and pointless, depending of course on how coherently and purposefully, in short how wisely, such gimmickry is imposed. In Lunt's case, there was occasional charm and quite a lot of pointless affectation. A further difficulty is that Broadway has so little experience of this sort of thing that any such plan is likely to be very inconsistently carried out, especially under the aegis of a director like Lunt who seems to grasp only the most obvious surface implications of a concept like "stylishness"—a concept which represents, of course, Broadway's uncomprehending attempt to get at the solid Latin tradition of what I have called Histrionic Vitalism. And since consistency of application is surely the primary ingredient of any style, "stylish" or otherwise, this surface approach tends to be *ipso facto*, self-defeating.

What was true of the direction was also true in a parallel way of the sets and costumes. There were some visually interesting things, and some very garish ones. The minor ondines, for example, looked like something out of Minsky's burlesque, while Ondine's own appearance usually seemed strikingly correct. Peter Larkin's sets were lavishly enough conceived and must have been very expensive; but the general effect never came quite right: there were just enough tasteless or inharmonious features spread throughout to suggest a kind of technicolor vulgarity that, by calling attention to itself, made war on the spirit of the play. What bewildered me was why the Tchelitchev designs which Jouvet used in Paris—some of the finest theatrical sets I've ever

seen—were not reproduced here: surely such a collaboration is an artistic event worth perpetuating.

Yet, in all fairness, it should be said that most of the production's very considerable number of faults were not really blatant or outrageous, but simply there enough to be mildly distracting. Any degree of distraction was, however, to be deeply resented; for the production provided one rare meeting of a rich theatrical personality with an even richer part that in more auspicious circumstances would have made for a truly breathtaking theatrical occasion. Even as it was, Audrey Hepburn's strange and intense performance as Ondine went a long way toward overwhelming the combined deficiencies of Lunt and Valency, and made the evening as a whole one to be grateful for. I have tried to analyse what it is that Miss Hepburn brings to this role, and I can only conclude that it is something like raw genius. For, aside from her pert physical beauty, she has no extraordinary talents in the usual sense, and her technique as such is almost nil: her voice tricks are shamelessly pinched from Joan Greenwood, and her movements could have been formed in any beginner's ballet class. She survives, and triumphs, on a kind of sheer will (and sometimes, willfulness), an indescribably vital intensity that simply subjects and transforms whatever stands between her and the purest projection of what she feels the role should be. (Fortunately, her feelings in this case were beyond reproach.) In her mouth, Valency's dead prose, subjected to peculiar intonations and paced with calculated strangeness, somehow became art; just as the rather obviously stylized movements, which Lunt had designed for her, became weirdly fascinating, simply by virtue of the perfect, almost naïve, single-mindedness with which she executed them. It was an extraordinary phenomenon to watch; and the audience-rapport which it established was precisely correct for Giraudoux. It had the effect, like Giraudoux's language, of transfixing the spectator without profoundly involving him, of moving him only at the distance of a certain aesthetic detachment. And it must be confessed that half the joy of the performance was in the welcome respite which it provided from the more normal Broadway rapport of aggressive (and, alas, sometimes only tenacious) *Ein-fühlung*. The only question that remains is where Miss Hepburn can go from here, now that she has won all the prizes, and made all the critics go limp with love of her—and still is not, in any full sense, an actress. It will be intriguing to discover whether mere genius is enough.

IV

Space limitations will not permit a thorough analysis of the off-Broadway production of *The Threepenny Opera* at the Theatre de Lys. But a brief mention is necessary if only to insist that this best-known work of Bertolt Brecht's, with music by Kurt Weill, is an authentic masterpiece, and, on the basis of the present production, an almost indestructible one. The fundamental deficiency

of the production, underscoring a poor piece of direction, seemed to me, once again, one of translation. Marc Blitzstein originally prepared a highly Americanized version, with the scene transferred from Soho to New York's Dock Street in the nineteenth century, and the language full of American slang of an unreal Broadway musical variety. The present version is back in Soho, but much of the slick Americanism—including references to Dock Street—somewhat incongruously remains. "*Nur wer im Wohlstand lebt, lebt angenehm*" becomes, for example, "The bulging pocket makes the easy life"—not a bad phrase in itself, but too cute, and just enough off in its meaning to give a whole different tone to the context. Some of the other songs—particularly, "The Army Song", "The Song of the Inadequacy of Human Endeavor" (here called "Useless Song"), and the brilliant "Solomon Song"—were thoroughly ruined, their meanings distorted and their flavor destroyed; but on the whole, Blitzstein's alterations were more of tone than of substance. Brecht's irony and wit depend not so much on the words themselves as on the words in context, played off against the music and delivered in an ironic way. Blitzstein's prime mistake, aside from his sloppiness in failing to remove echoes of an earlier conception, was in attempting to make the words too witty in themselves, and in picking a slick and frivolous form of Broadway wit to be guided by.¹

The production itself was by no means incompetent in a purely technical sense, but it did seem to take its cue from Blitzstein's tone, and not from Brecht's explicit and lengthy instructions about the play. There was no consistency in the direction, and only two of the performers made any attempt to caricature their roles or project the irony in the broad and extravagant manner that Brecht intended. MacHeath came out as rather like Pal Joey, only sweeter and more *matinée*-idolish. Polly played it absolutely straight: she was the simple Broadway romantic heroine, no more no less, though she had perhaps the best voice in the company and might have done something fine. Only Lotte Lenya, recreating her original 1928 performance as Jenny, was able to show what really could be done: she had the bitterness, the power, the sly irony, and the twinkling cynicism, but she seemed (and was) like a character out of another play. Even the two who made an attempt at caricature—Mr. and Mrs. Peachum—did so inconsistently and apparently on their own initiative, so that what they did had no relation to the rest of what was going on. All of which only confirmed what anybody who has had much to do with Brecht's plays must know—namely, that Brecht so thoroughly establishes his

¹There are many things in the Blitzstein version that are superior to the previous Bentley-Vesey version; but it is, on the whole, much less faithful to Brecht, and for production purposes seems to me no more stageworthy. I had the feeling that Blitzstein occasionally went out of his way to avoid the Bentley-Vesey phraseology, especially in songs like "The Army Song" which almost translate literally into good English. It seems a pity that where master-works are involved, new versions cannot be progressive improvements of old ones, where the old ones have real merit to offer—particularly, it would seem to me, where neither translator is an imaginative writer of stature or highly individual quality.

own theatrical terms that the biggest burden of any Brecht production falls on the director, who alone can see to it that those terms are consistently fulfilled. And I suspect that no director who truly understood those terms would have acquiesced in Blitzstein's version in the first place.

V

I have left until last T. S. Eliot's *The Confidential Clerk*, which played with mild unsuccess at the Morosco, because it does not really belong among the productions reviewed above. It was not an import in the same sense as the translated plays; and it almost certainly will never become a classic. Its faults were entirely its own, Broadway's contribution to the event being, in fact, much more than creditable. The printed version of the play is being reviewed in these pages, and I should like merely to set down here some general impressions of a peculiarly ambiguous evening in the theatre.

That pervasive ambiguity, which seems to have been felt in varying degrees by nearly everybody, is not easy to analyse and profoundly difficult to describe. I suspect, however, that the basic key to the mystery is to be found in the highly special and abstracted dramatic environment which Eliot poses for our contemplation. In all fundamental respects, this environment is purely a creature of Eliot's imagination, and even perhaps of his longings, unlike any real environment that one has ever experienced; and yet it has enough surface resemblances to a certain actual upper-middle-class milieu to seem recognizable. This is a reversal, of course, of the normal methods of social comedy which are to reveal fundamental truths about the real world by polishing and exaggerating its surface. More than anything else, it seemed to me, this special milieu which Eliot's characters inhabit approximates that "idea, or ideal, of a community small enough to consist of a nexus of direct personal relationships", to which he refers in *The Idea of a Christian Society*, and "in which all iniquities and turpitudes will take the simple and easily appreciable form of wrong relations between one person and another". This matter of "wrong relations" is crucial, and two things must be said about it. One is that such relations are not merely at the core of the thematic material in the play; they also represent the basic principle on which the action is organized: the outlandish plot, which revolves on mistaken identities, is only the farcical embodiment of Eliot's more serious intentions, and is probably meant to underline them, though it only half succeeds in doing so. The second is that these "wrong relations" have a way of passing over into no relations at all—and that, it seemed to me, was what accounted for the very anaemic dramatism of the play. A world in which everybody confesses at every available opportunity that they do not "understand" one another, and in which communication between individuals is seen as a haphazard and uncertain affair, is on the face of it not a world which

drama, and especially comedy, is a very fit medium to express. Surely, the irrelations between people are at best somewhat negative constituents of a dramatic situation. Another problem is that the limits to this special Eliotic milieu are absolute: one never senses any extension into a larger world, and one cannot, therefore, pursue Eliot's themes or his characters or his situations beyond the context which he has given them. They simply have no relevance; and the result is that the play has, in a sense, no implications. Thus the unexpected events and remarks—which are meant both to provide the comedy and to establish the peculiarity of the context—come, more often than not, as plain absurdities rather than as the comic or dramatic surprises they are meant to be.

The much-debated Christianity of the play seems to me embedded not so much in the didactic statements of which the dialogue is largely composed—though these of course reflect it indirectly—as in this more general and elusive Eliotic milieu. The society referred to above, Eliot says further on, would be one “in which the natural end of man—virtue and well-being in community—is acknowledged for all, and the supernatural end—beatitude—for those who have the eyes to see it.” This would seem to explain why Eggerson (who is the only real Christian in the play by Eliot's standards) suggests as a matter of course at the end of the play—though it seems an astonishing and somewhat irrelevant suggestion to the audience—that Colby will certainly be wanting eventually to take up orders. For we are meant to assume that Colby, who chooses to spend his life as a second-rate organist because he discovers that that is what his father was, is, like Harry in *The Family Reunion* and Celia in *The Cocktail Party*, the one who sees, i.e., the only one capable of coming to real “understanding” (a word which echoes through this play no less predominantly than it did through the previous two). Actually this special vision of Colby's seemed to me less well established in a dramatic way even than Celia's, though the answer to this objection may be that, in Eliot's Christian society, such vision is not necessarily a dramatic phenomenon—which is all very well as an idea, but does not solve the dramatic problem. I do not, in any case, mean to suggest that Eliot has attempted to draw a portrait in this play of his ideal Christian society, for that is certainly not the case; but only that he has conceived his milieu as existing somewhere between that society and ours—or perhaps more precisely, that his portrait of our society is abstracted as much as possible to stress those elements in it which, if fully operative, would eventually lead to the other. Nor do I mean to suggest that this academic and dramatically lifeless conception was very readily apparent in the play as performed; on the contrary, such success as the play achieved must surely have depended on Eliot's shrewdness in concealing it. But it nonetheless was there, like a spinster-goddess in the machine, and it made itself felt—in the form of that disturbing and indefinable something which kept frustrating a real vitality that occasionally seemed about to emerge.

But if, in this total sense, the play was profoundly unsatisfying, and even somewhat disagreeable, there were many honest satisfactions of a partial kind to be had. Eliot's language, for example, though watered down and sometimes on the verge of a merely stuffy elegance, was nonetheless Eliot's language, and as such, had occasional moments which no currently available dramatic language can match. Even as a whole it was good to listen to, though not, perhaps, *very* good—except insofar as some very good things were done with it, notably by Ina Claire. Actually, Ina Claire's performance alone would have made the evening worthwhile; for she put to brilliant use on the most completely characterized role in the play all those subtle devices of high comedy at which she is probably the most adept American actress now living. There were, in addition, several other excellent performances, all in different styles (though this actually seemed to correspond, in a strange way, to Eliot's conception), and directed with prissy good taste by E. Martin Browne. Joan Greenwood, who is perhaps something of an acquired taste (though her admirers, like myself, tend to be insatiable), gave her usual mannered performance, posturing her skinny body and playing tricks on her gravel voice, but with a colorful vitality of which her role, as written, was only a pale indication. There was a sensible, well-delivered, and sometimes very moving performance by Claude Rains as Sir Claude; and an amiable but rather negative one as Colby by Douglas Watson, who for the past several seasons has seemed to land only very blank roles, of which this was unquestionably one of the blankest. Paul Morrison added a very considerable visual satisfaction to the evening with two of the most correct and tasteful stage settings I have seen all season.

VI

It seems worth pointing out, by way of a concluding note, that the five productions reviewed here, whatever their faults, do represent a side of Broadway that is far too little taken into account—especially by those very literary intellectuals to whom it might mean the most. Any season that includes Anouilh, Shakespeare, Giraudoux, Brecht, and Eliot (with a Tchekov to come) cannot, in all fairness, be shrugged off with a sneer in the manner of Saul Bellow's recent piece of ugly nonsense in the *Partisan Review*. It is perfectly true that much of Broadway's idealism is still of an ignorant order; it is also true that many of Broadway's proclaimed good intentions turn out to be only of the kind that hell is paved with; but that a genuine repository of good will does exist here and there—and can be exploited—is not to be denied. And if it presently falls largely to second and third raters to do the exploiting, it cannot honestly be claimed that it does so otherwise than by default.

PATRICK CRUTTWELL

Letter from England

SINCE THE WRITINGS OF ALL CRITICS ARE LARGELY DECIDED by things no more under their control than their heredities, perhaps a commentator on the English literary scene had better begin by giving his own limiting conditions. Age-group, 1911—which means, that the contemporary writers by whom he was excited in those years of life (c. 17 to 23?) in which one's literary excitements are permanently decisive for the bent of one's taste, were the Eliot of *The Waste Land* and *The Sacred Wood*, Lawrence, Yeats, Joyce, Forster and Woolf. Education: Cambridge, in the time of *Scrutiny's* beginning, the lectures of Leavis and I. A. Richards, the verse and early criticism of Empson, the first poems of Auden and Day Lewis, the left turn of the intelligentsia from aestheticism to Marxism. Livelihood: academic. Subject: English. Habitat: one of those English universities called, by an odd misnomer, "provincial"—which means, neither Oxford nor Cambridge. Would like to call himself a humanist—if he thought that that label, nowadays, carried any clear meaning to himself or to anyone else. But it serves as a negative definition—neither Christian nor Communist—and till someone invents a better, "humanist" it will have to be.

I find it very hard to describe what seems to me the present state of English letters. Is that only because the *present* is always hard to describe? No, not only: what is hard to describe is what is featureless, and that is the word I would choose for our present condition. A queer muted dimness, an uncertainty not as of vigorous disputants pulling in contrary directions but as of half-living creatures not quite sure if they want to pull anything in any direction—that seems our state. We are pestered by ghosts who will not lie down. There are the faded and fatuous relics of a well-bred aestheticism—they natter and gossip in the book-reviews on Sundays. There are all the once-Lefters of the 1930's, most respectable, most patriotic nowadays, reminding me eternally of Robert Frost's epigram—

I never dared be radical when young

For fear it would make me conservative when old.

There are the popular-highbrow novelists, Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh for instance, who have long ago fixed their manners and said their says and will simply repeat. There is Mr. Eliot, our Grand Old Man—English letters must have a G.O.M., as Somerset Maugham's Alroy Kear pointed out—he is deeply, and justly, admired, but if he is genuinely influential, a real centre, then I for one cannot see it. There is no real centre. Is it, again, a time-caused

illusion that at other times there was? Again, I think not. I asked one of my students, not long ago, if there were any genuinely new writers for whom she and her generation felt the sort of proprietary interest, the delighted certainty that they could appreciate something which their silly elders could not, the interest and certainty that I and my generation, twenty odd years ago, used to feel for Eliot and Lawrence—and she answered: “No: your gods are still our gods.” No need, of course, to be irrevocably pessimistic; all literatures go through such times of featureless stagnation. Our own has perhaps a certain resemblance to the closing years of the eighteenth century; Dr. Johnson’s Mrs. Thrale, scribbling in her *Thraliana* her opinion of the fashionable verse of the 1790’s, of Erasmus Darwin and the “Della Cruscans” in particular, put her finger on something which I find today—a pointless ingenuity of mannerisms covering in vain an emptiness of content. “Miss Weston has lent me”, she tells us, “Dr. Darwin’s pretty ode to the Derwent. I think it has more meaning than the modern Productions in general are blessed with: but Writers now seem emulously desirous to *bend their Eye*, and that of their Readers—on *Vacancy* . . . if all the Epithets are compounded, and the Periods elegantly arranged, it appears that all Meaning is needless, and thought superfluous. . .”

To my student’s plaint there was, I believe, one exception—Dylan Thomas—but to my mind, a depressing exception, if true. The death of that poet—to be more exact, what followed his death—was certainly the most extraordinary event in the world of English letters for many a long year. I cannot think of anything quite like it, for the quality it revealed was such as seemed to call for the comments and attention of a psychiatrist rather than of a literary critic. When a writer in our new *London Magazine* declared that now “something like a panic descends upon the world of letters”, when the *Times* obituary held up Thomas as a shining example of how to write as a Christian, when George Barker affirmed that the manner of Thomas’s death proved “the direct intervention of the devil in our affairs”—then clearly we are hull down on the high seas of nonsense, far from the ports of reason. We are there, I imagine, because of that featureless stagnation I spoke of. For that has bred a pathetic craving to find a New Genius—and Thomas, it was thought (but if I am any prophet, will not be thought for long), Thomas filled the bill. The craving was naively expressed by John Lehmann, editor of the *London Magazine*, in its second number. “It is the genius one waits for,” he sighed, “the writer who is going to be head and shoulder above his contemporaries by natural force of temperament combined with a new way of marrying vision and feeling.” Yes, but—isn’t it likely that the more obsessedly we strain our eyes for the new light’s rising, the less we are likely to see it? And can we rely on an admirer of Edith Sitwell’s poetry to perform the feat of discernment—when or if the light has appeared?

There is a reaction, though, making itself apparent and, it may be, destined

to grow. That foolish remark about panic descending, etc., provoked an answer; Donald Davie was impelled to protest that he preferred to take his poets in a frame of mind more serious and less adolescent. He is, in this, by no means alone. The poetry of Thomas and Edith Sitwell represents, to my mind, a kind of art which is the absolute negation of good sense and right reason, and the verbal patterns and ingenuities it abounds in, which are often brought forward as proofs of conscious art, are in fact but the modern equivalents of those meaningless mannerisms which Mrs. Thrale reprehended. I believe that something may be emerging—how it will grow is more than I or anyone can say—which aims at putting back good sense where it ought to be.

There are one or two young or youngish writers—Kingsley Amis, Donald Davie, John Wain are perhaps the best known—who seem to be working in this direction. They have in common the academic profession: a fact which has already led to their being told they are a Movement—I don't know if they like this or not—and labelled the "University Wits", neo-Elizabethan vintage. Their writings have in common a certain dryness (in the good sense, usually), an intellectual, ironic, Empson-ish tone. They have also in common a detachment from—indeed, I should guess, a hostility towards—that world of literary *chic*, the bankrupt world of the heirs of Bloomsbury, which still would seem to dominate our literary scene. The matter was—one can hardly say clarified, but at least it was aired—in an odd controversy which wriggled its serpentine length through the columns of the *New Statesman and Nation* some time ago. John Wain had been editing a wireless programme which gave a platform to new or newish writers. The *New Statesman* critic protested; it was, he said in effect (I quote from memory), dull, dowdy, dismally academic and provincial. Wain replied; others replied; we all replied. Prejudices of every sort, dead or alive, were brought to the light of day and beaten like ancient carpets. Dimly, through the dust, one discerned metropolitan engaged with provincial, academic doing battle with Bohemian, *chic* and frivolous at death-grips with dowdy and serious, Oxford-and-Cambridge engaging the less glamorous institutions of higher learning. Out of it all one small nugget of interest may have been dug. The controversy seemed to bring into contemporary focus a line of argument latterly much followed in Leavis's *Scrutiny*—by Leavis himself, in particular—the argument that there is a kind of rival tradition in English literature, a tradition provincial, homespun, self-educating, in which may be counted Bunyan, George Eliot, and Lawrence. Whether the existence of such a "line" could really be proved to the satisfaction of any scholarly enquirer, I take leave to doubt; whether its literary representatives and products are superior to those of its rival, I don't doubt at all, I am certain they are not: but at least the theory served to direct attention, as to something desirable, to a certain *type* of writer, honest, plain, unattached to the cliques and the pressure-groups against which Leavis has waged his sleepless warfare, sometimes tedious, sometimes obsessed, but always genuine and always valuable.

And now his *Scrutiny* has come to an end. One can say "his" *Scrutiny* with no offence to its other distinguished contributors; for none of them, I fancy, would deny that it was *his* mind which marked the whole journal with its imprint. That imprint, quite unmistakable both in thought and manner, is nevertheless not so easy to define; for Leavis, behind the forthrightness of his judgments, is an elusive, not to say a slippery, customer, hard to analyse in any terms, impossible in terms which he himself will not regard as misrepresenting him. The core of his critical method seems to be a determination not to be bound to any ideology whatsoever. Early issues (before the war) show a certain flirting with the Marxism then current: but that went soon. Later ones reject with equal decision various efforts to annex literary criticism to Christian theology. Leavis has stayed disengaged, consistently, through an epoch peculiarly hostile to disengagement. And this he has done without falling into the opposite trap, of futile aestheticism; he has always maintained, and in critical practice enforced, that literature's ultimate values must be social and moral. The tightrope can not have made easy balancing, and the last years of *Scrutiny* show signs of the strain: a repetitive shrillness, a prose more and more addicted to Chinese puzzles of Jamesian parentheses. But Leavis's *Scrutiny* has served English letters supremely well, through the twenty-two years of its life. Its old volumes, as I have lately been finding, still make lively and rewarding reading; right or wrong (and usually right), the forthright decisiveness of its manner was peculiarly valuable in a time when most English criticism was a mealy-mouthed hedging. And would be valuable now, for most of it is mealy-mouthed still.

Reviews

HUGH KENNER

Tales of the Vienna Woods

THE LIFE AND WORK OF SIGMUND FREUD (Vol. I: The Formative Years and the Great Discoveries, 1856-1900), by *Ernest Jones, M.D.* Basic Books. \$6.75.

IT CAN VERY NEARLY BE CLAIMED FOR THE SUBJECT of this biography that he has been the presiding genius of the early twentieth century. An age in flight from diversity is delighted by one-page explanations of all human phenomena, and Freud has seemed for many years the most plausible of those investigators in whose name such pronouncements can be issued. Since the early 19th century the dominant philosophy of the West has been some guise or other of German pessimism: of this Freud's utterances-at-large are a clinical variant. In the climate of all these philosophies what a person takes to be his undertakings and achievements are really just details of some process he doesn't comprehend: the class war, or the struggle for survival, or the Decline of the West, or the apotheosis of Emergent Will. What people think they are doing, and so their conscious life in general, gets consequently devalued; the illusion of being conscious, and of intending and willing, is represented as no more than an indispensable self-deceit. So it is not surprising that the sequence of doctrines represented by Schopenhauer, Darwin, Marx, and subsequently Spengler should have reached equilibrium with Freud's promotion of the unconscious mind. "He would," his biographer writes, "have endorsed the view of the great anthropologist Tylor that 'the history of mankind is part and parcel of the history of Nature, that our thoughts, wills and actions accord with laws as definite as those which govern the motion of the waves'" (p. 366). The difficulty with all previous attempts to convince Mr. Everyman that he is the pawn of some Zeitgeist or other has been to demonstrate a linkage between its actions and what he persists in regarding as his own. In the wake of psychoanalysis this difficulty vanishes. Mr. Everyman carries his portion of the demiurge around with him in a sack labelled "the unconscious"; and it is useless for him to protest that he has never known this, for it is by definition unknowable, is it not?

That the spirit of these remarks seems irreverently remote from science must be ascribed to Freud himself. Even the very short book (*An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, written 1938) which he intended as a last resumé of his considered doctrines contains (p. 96) a pot-shot quasi-identification of Shakespeare

with the Earl of Oxford, whose family history provided the materials for a really splendid Oedipus Complex.¹ His lucid and cogent analyses of the machinery of certain mental happenings—dreaming, forgetting, recollecting, abridging and substituting—were soon submerged in his theatrical conviction that human affairs are transacted in a sort of omnipresent Venusberg. “He was apt,” writes Dr. Jones, “to be careless and imprecise in his use of terms, using, for instance, ‘perception’ as interchangeable with ‘idea’, and the like” (p. 371). He was even “ill-informed in the field of contemporary psychology and seems to have derived only from hearsay any knowledge he had of it” (p. 371). In his work, it may be maintained, a valuable core of observations and deductions got rapidly blurred and nearly smothered by increasingly wide and reckless generalizations. The early ambitious attempt to construct a complete working model of the mind, expounded by Dr. Jones at the end of the book, seems to have consisted almost entirely of terms invented to cover things he didn’t know.

Dr. Jones unintentionally makes it especially easy for us to see Freud in this way as one of the vastly influential philosophic amateurs of the 19th century, peddling his own brand of gloomy monism. His properly scientific work—the anatomizing of unconscious mental processes in pursuit of a technique for curing hysteria and other psychoses—didn’t, the biographer makes clear, come easily to him; in order to concentrate on observing something, he had to suppress a massive desire to speculate. We hear of

. . . a reply Freud once made to my question of how much philosophy he had read. The answer was: “Very little. As a young man I felt a strong attraction towards speculation and ruthlessly checked it.” (p. 29)

The adverb is characteristic; Freud shared the belief of his time that the man of science had to be a pretty heroic fellow, “ruthless”, “fearless”, “uncompromising”, and so on. “Nature,” he wrote of himself in 1883, “endowed me with a dauntless love of truth, the keen eye of an investigator, a rightful sense of the values of life, and the gift of working hard and finding pleasure in doing so” (p. 118). On that occasion he was on his dignity, writing beneath the eye of his betrothed. Here is a more romantic version, excerpted from an effusion to a male intimate: “I am not really a man of science, not an observer, not an experimenter, and not a thinker. I am nothing but by temperament a *conquistador* . . . with the curiosity, the boldness, and the tenacity that belongs to that type of being” (p. 348).

This volume, the first of three, takes the career of the hero only to the year

¹Though as late as 1931 he gave his imprimatur to an edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams* which adduces apropos of *Hamlet*, biographical data about the Stratford Shakespeare (*Basic Writings*, Modern Library, p. 310.)

1900, and the Freud it shows us isn't, despite these self-characterizations, the familiar figure of the later photographs, the greying Mephisto with the cigar gazing in bleak comprehension on the dismal panorama of Civilization and its Discontents. The Freud of "The Formative Years and the Great Discoveries" was a victim of "neurotic suffering and dependence", the kinks in whose soul included a melodramatic phobia of travelling by train (which he later connected with fear of losing "his home and ultimately his mother's breast"—p. 13), a lust for violent attachments (he "panted"—p. 301—for rare but compulsively necessary meetings with a rhinologist and numerologist named Fliess, to whom for some years, until a violent quarrel, he wrote weekly letters, and whose quasi-astrological jugglings with the numbers 23 and 28 he tried for years to build into the foundations of psychoanalysis); and an equally remarkable compulsion to alienate violently anyone he distrusted (about Josef Breuer, co-author of the *Studies in Hysteria*, he later used language so strong the biographer refrains from quoting it, and of his fiancée he demanded that she withdraw all affection from her mother and her brother: "—this on the grounds that they were his enemies, so that she should share his hatred of them"—p. 123). The difference between this Freud and the more familiar one Dr. Jones, like a good Freudian, ascribes to the self-analysis begun in 1897. From this "there emerged the serene and benign Freud, henceforth free to pursue his work in imperturbable composure" (p. 320).

Incipit Vita Nuova; it makes a fine climax for Volume One, and presumably by the time Volume Two comes along it will have blurred in the faithful reader's mind sufficiently to evade embarrassment. The orthodox Freudian who conceived the plot of this trilogy, however, is somewhat undercut by the chronicler who incautiously included a few glimpses of the "serene and benign" Freud of later years. The following incident, which took place in 1912, is recorded within three pages of the sentence just quoted. At a luncheon with five disciples in a Munich hotel,

. . . he began reproaching the two Swiss, Jung and Riklin, for writing articles expounding psychoanalysis in Swiss periodicals without mentioning his name. Jung replied that they had thought it unnecessary to do so, it being so well known, but Freud had sensed already the first signs of the dissension that was to follow a year later. He persisted, and I remember thinking he was taking the matter rather personally. Suddenly, to our consternation, he fell on the floor in a dead faint. The sturdy Jung swiftly carried him to a couch in the lounge, where he soon revived. His first words as he was coming to were strange: "How sweet it must be to die"—another indication that the idea of dying had some esoteric meaning for him. (p. 317)

This was fifteen years after the self-analysis started. As for his having, as we were told on p. 13, been able to "dispel" the travelling phobia by analysis, we learn on p. 305 that "he retained in later life relics of it in being so anxious

not to miss a train that he would arrive at the station a long while—even an hour—beforehand.”

In attending to trivia of this sort we are following Dr. Jones, whose *bosse professionel* is an almost comic preoccupation with anything that would ordinarily pass as too petty for extensive remark.² We are told that the hero still wet his bed at the age of two (p. 7), and once urinated in his parents' bedroom at the age of seven (p. 16); that matches in Paris in 1885 cost him a whole penny a box (p. 184), and that he applied chemical tests to the green curtains in his hotel bedroom there “to make sure they did not contain arsenic” (p. 183); that twenty years after his first piece of laboratory work, an inconclusive investigation of the gonadic structure of eels, he bore a faint grudge against the teacher who had set him a task in which he could not make “some brilliant and original discovery”³ (p. 38); that an overseer he disliked was exactly the age of his half-brother, “the imagined rival with his mother in early childhood”, while one he admired was a contemporary of “his omniscient and beloved father” (p. 39). This half-brother is the theme of one of the funniest paragraphs in the book, the one that deals with the two-year-old Freud's growing suspicion “that some man was even more intimate with his mother than he was” (p. 14). A baby, the infant Hercules noted, was on the way; “jealousy of the intruder, and anger for whoever had seduced his mother into this unfaithful proceeding, were inevitable. Discarding his knowledge of the sleeping conditions in the house, he rejected the thought that the nefarious person could be his beloved and perfect father.” So he elected to hate the half-brother; and “his intelligence was given a task from which he never flinched until, forty years later, he found the solution in a fashion that made his name immortal.”

Dr. Jones is of course quite insensitive to the inherent comedy of these solemn remarks. The Freudians, most readers must have noticed, are funnier than Freud, though the Master, with his usual penchant for overplaying his hand, did psychoanalyse Moses, and did commit himself to the view that small boys want to be engine-drivers because of the sexual stimulation afforded by “shaking sensations experienced in wagons and railroad trains” (*Basic Writings*, p. 600). His American translator, Dr. Brill, unsmilingly relates the case of a scopophiliac who “was able to *sublimate* the tendency for perverse looking” by becoming a dealer in optical instruments (*Basic Writings*, p. 18) and gives us an equally Flaubertian image of conversation at the staff dinnertable of the Burghölzi Clinic in Zurich:

²Though Mr. Paul Goodman in the *Kenyon Review* (Winter 1954) complains that the early part of the book is skimpy: “Jones mentions not a word about toilet-habits and there is no history of masturbation or its absence.”

³Dr. Jones' footnote is worth reproducing: “One is tempted to make the perhaps irrelevant remark that the future discoverer of the castration complex was disappointed at not being able to find the testes of the eel.”

No one could make a slip of any kind without immediately being called on to evoke free associations to explain it. It did not matter that women were present—wives and female voluntary internes—who might have curbed the frankness usually produced by free associations. The women were just as keen to discover the concealed mechanisms as their husbands. (*Basic Writings*, p. 27)

This, plainly, is a sort of comedy not covered by Freud's celebrated analysis, since no unconscious energy is being liberated. Its principle is the unwitting disclosure of a monomania. The only thing of which Dr. Jones, for instance, appears to be unconscious is the extravagance of his admiration for his subject. He is more objective than Freud's other intimates, he tells us; "my own hero-worshipping propensities had been worked through before I encountered him" (p. xiii). Yet with the warmth of Bouvard commending Pécuchet he shakes his head in dignified admiration whenever the Master opens his mouth or sets pen to paper. The letters Freud wrote to his betrothed "would be a not unworthy contribution to the great love-literature of the world. The style is at times reminiscent of Goethe"⁴ (p. 99). Of Freud's touristic descriptions of the various cities he visited ("Brussels was wonderfully beautiful, an enormous town with splendid buildings. . . .") he remarks on the "unusually keen powers of observation" and announces their separate publication (p. 182). His portentiousness has a flavour all its own. Freud's fantasy of reproaching the Almighty for not giving him a better brain was "the remark of a man not easily satisfied" (p. 35). His ritual of devoting the last half-hour of every day to further self-analysis was "one more example of his flawless integrity" (p. 327). When he forsook physiology for psychology "the struggle must have been titanic" (p. 286). Of "his most heroic feat—a psychoanalysis of his own unconscious", Dr. Jones remarks with fatuous awe, "no one again can be the first to explore those depths" (p. 319).

Behind these gaucheries lies the reason for the extraordinary fascination of this book. Through a lucky combination of professional solemnity and professional regard for minutiae, Dr. Jones has given us all the material we need to see Freud embedded in his time and place, pursuing a representative 19th century career. The nonconformists of that age—Flaubert, Ibsen, and, in his special way, James Joyce, are familiar examples—seem to have been locked into a biographical pattern possessing a number of standard elements. These are (1) a youth distinguished by both emotional turmoil and devotion to an ideal of thoroughness (Cf. Dodgson and Carroll; Freud performed a number of apparently unimpeachable pieces of physiological research); (2) a period of stormy

⁴"Woe to you, my Princess, when I come. I will kiss you quite red and feed you till you are plump. And if you are forward you shall see who is the stronger, a gentle little girl who doesn't eat enough or a big wild man *who has cocaine in his body*." We are cautioned that much is lost in translation, though "Meine geliebte Braut. Soweit das Schreiben. Was nun folgt ist Umschreibung" is offered in illustration of their evanescent humour.

relationships with other people, characterized by a loud insistence on utter and complete understanding which is always getting snagged on the unwillingness of the other people to be taken possession of in that fashion; (3) a phase, setting in at about the fortieth year, in which the life-work ruthlessly pursued erupts suddenly into publicity and bourgeois scandal; and (4), immediately thereafter, a prolonged middle age during which, from behind a mask of majestic indifference, the hero, all passion supposedly spent, watches himself being turned into an institution. This last phase—Joyce in Paris, Flaubert coaching Maupassant, Ibsen returned from exile—is too common a feature of the *Heldenleben* to require the adduction of a Freudian self-analysis in explanation.

Nothing is more "period", for instance, than Freud's passion, so impressive to Dr. Jones, for threshing matters out. The theme of the long chapter about the four-year betrothal is "His hatred for half-measures and his determination to probe the truth to the bitter end, however bitter" (p. 123). The end, in those days, was always supposed to be bitter. "Their relationship must be quite perfect; the slightest blur was not to be tolerated" (p. 110). Having sent Martha's mother a tart letter, he wrote Martha, "I have put a good deal more of my wrath in cold storage which will be dished up some day. I am young, tenacious and active; I shall pay all my debts, including this one" (p. 123). Dr. Jones should not ask us to suppose that in reading passages like these we have a finger on the pulse of Freud's genius; what throbs through the pages in question is the shiny brass engine of 19th century implacable rectitude. The identical beat is discernible in many speeches from *Exiles*, which is about this state of mind, or in Ibsen's letters to his sister Hedvig. Freud's conception of human relations was rather provincial than otherwise, and this thirst—masquerading as a love of sincerity—for subduing other people's wills to his own, was exaggerated by the social climate of bourgeois Austria, where no mean seems to have been conceivable between utter repudiation of another's right to existence and standing on his feet while breathing protestations of friendship into his face. Here is part of the saga of Fritz, who trifled with Martha's affections:

Then Fritz called for pen and paper, and wrote a letter to her on the spot. Freud insisted on reading it, and it made the blood rush to his head. . . . Freud tore the letter in pieces, at which Fritz left in mortification. They followed him and tried to bring him to his senses, but he only broke down in tears. This softened Freud, whose own eyes became moist; he seized his friend's arm and escorted him home. But the next morning a harder mood supervened, and he felt ashamed of his weakness. "The man who brings tears to my eyes must do a great deal before I forgive him. I am made of harder stuff than he is, and when we match each other he will find he is not my equal." . . . (p. 112)

Every fact supplied by the biographer confirms Wyndham Lewis's judgment of 25 years ago, that Freud's is "the psychology appropriate to a highly com-

munized patriarchal society in which *the family* and its close relationship is an intense obsession, and the obscene familiarities of a closely-packed communal sex-life a family joke, as it were" (*The Enemy*, No. II, p. 68). He seems never to have questioned the universality of the family customs and practices of bourgeois Mittel-Europa. For instance, the severest trauma of a small boy's life, "the central experience of the years of childhood, the greatest problem of early life and the most important source of later inadequacy" depends on his mother threatening him with castration as a disciplinary measure; and Freud as late as 1938 seems to have thought that the practice of issuing this threat was as universal as the practice of breathing. By the nature of psychoanalytic theory, once a practitioner gets an idea like this into his head, nothing can get it out; patients who protest that it never happened to them merely illustrate the way the event is "so completely forgotten that its reconstruction during the work of analysis is met by the adult's most determined scepticism" (*Outline of Psychoanalysis*, p. 95).

"I always find it uncanny when I can't understand someone in terms of myself," Freud wrote in 1882 (p. 320). To this romantic subjectivism, reinforced by the Mitteleuropian norm of hysterical oscillation between coldness and intimacy and by the German-idealist emphasis on the will as the only thing real or meaningful, we have only to add the Helmholtzian tradition of scientific determinism, in which Freud was trained and which he never forsook, to arrive at a working model of both the man and his doctrines.

"Like most adolescents Freud had the need to 'believe in something', and in his case the something was Science with a capital" (p. 40). This religion, which he shared with so many eminent Victorians, came to him in a form "deeply imbued with the principles of causality and determinism, so pronounced in the Helmholtz school that had dominated his early scientific discipline" (p. 245). The moment we can imagine this faith placed at the service of his preoccupation with how people felt about other people—especially about him—we have the key to his severe pursuit of trivia, his stern determination that the verbal slip you uttered in his presence, or the name he was himself unable to remember (for he was as hard on himself as on anyone) *meant something*. And of course his "passion for threshing things out" intervened on the spot. We shall *have this out*, here and now! And since "he never abandoned determinism for teleology" (p. 45), the meaning of the slip which you persisted in treating so lightly lay in the past. Backwards, then, the threads of "free association" were to be traced, if necessary back to the cradle. The instant unbroken trains of rigid causality are posited, one is committed to saying that the events that control one's behaviour now occurred in remote infancy. It was Freud's distinction that he pursued these consequences with fanaticism to the end. (He even thought of pursuing them beyond the womb; in a footnote to a chapter on the Oedipus Complex we read, "The possibility cannot be excluded that a

phylogenetic memory-trace may contribute to the extra-ordinarily terrifying effect of the threat [of castration]—a memory-trace from the prehistory of the human family, when the jealous father would actually rob his son of his genitals if the latter interfered with him in rivalry for a woman.” Though we have no record of this jealous cave-man, we have Freud’s assurance that “dreams offer a source of human prehistory which is not to be despised.” The Darwinian view that ontogeny repeats phylogeny was another premise he never forsook (*Outline of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 92, 50).

Freud’s philosophical achievement—like that of a chess-master who contrives an impregnable opening—was to combine the ambient premises of 19th century continental pessimism into the most impenetrable of orthodoxies. By transforming Schopenhauer’s “will” into “the unconscious” he placed the whole complex of interdependent doctrines beyond discussion. The axioms of psychoanalysis are not statements about things in general, nor about a sort of Lockean working model to be considered with dispassion, but statements about *you*; and when you question one of them the Freudian cocks a caustic eyebrow and enquires into your motives for evading self-knowledge. Discussion, for that matter, always nettled Freud, whether because he took it as a personal affront or because he recognized the futility of its attempts to penetrate the machine he had constructed. At any rate, in deference to his wishes, it has always been forbidden at Psychoanalytic Congresses. His last book begins with the tart warning that the teachings of psychoanalysis “are based upon an incalculable number of observations and experiences, and no one who has not repeated those observations upon himself or upon others is in a position to arrive at an independent judgment of it” (*Outline*, p. 9). In another late work he says that “the recognition we afford to sexuality is—whether they confess it or not—the strongest motive for our opponents’ hostility to psychoanalysis. But are we to let ourselves be shaken on that account? It only shows us how neurotic our whole culture is, when apparently normal people behave no differently than neurotics” (*The Question of Lay Analysis*, p. 54). So the mere enquirer hasn’t a chance. Neither had associates. Breuer, when his feet cooled on the threshold of Venusberg, was hurled amid maledictions into limbo. Jung was excommunicated (or severed himself; accounts differ. Volume II may be expected to throw light on that mysterious affair).

From subsequent volumes, too, we may expect to learn more about the extraordinary spread of Freud’s doctrines. It was of course to be expected that a body of statements so involuted as to be capable of absorbing, like a Venus Fly-trap, the enquirer who perches on the rim of its most peripheral conclusions, would achieve a sort of underground popularity, especially among individuals anxious to appear interesting to themselves. And the constant incitement to introspection (since you cannot safely examine your neighbour’s unconscious) has led many readers into a process of self-examination so inexact

it would convince them that all their dreams were symbolically related to elephants, if that was what they had been told they would find. Again, the British literary and artistic avant-garde of the 20's and 30's constituted a powerful engine of publicity. Nothing gives the "feel" of that period more vividly today than the plexus of notions its languid literati were absorbing. It seemed pleasant, apparently, to be told that your inability to rival Michaelangelo was the result of a neurosis, or that the trivialities that flicker at the threshold of a consciousness that isn't attending to anything were the forked tips of subterranean flames. No one, in that milieu, seems to have found the unconscious *dull*, though a glance at the files of, say, *Transition* will convince us that nothing is deader than "automatic writing" and no one drearier than a synthetic primitive. There is no Poe-esque energy in those morbid dungeons beneath the stratum of conscious life: nothing but the same dreary Oedipus Complex, universally distributed. Freud's Id, one would think, could inspire a *frisson* in nobody. Perhaps it was modish to despise *frisson*; the Freudian years in Anglo-Saxonry were the enervated decades of ("yes, oh dear yes") Forster and Mrs. Woolf.

For Freud the conscious part of the mind does nothing but mediate between the monotonous demands of the Id and an external reality which can be called "real" only by courtesy: an external world whose phenomena manifest only two sorts of character—either they comply readily with the Id, or they don't. There is no question of the mind *knowing* them, or of its life drawing nourishment from their intelligible species. Rather, there may be such questions, but Freud isn't interested; and so interlocked are his expositions that he soon gives the impression of ignoring their existence. His is a world in which, ultimately, nothing possesses any interest at all, except for the sort of tumid interest people can always derive from themselves.

It nettled him a little that "the pleasure principle requires a reduction, or perhaps ultimately the extinction, of the tension of the instinctual needs (that is, a state of *Nirvana*)": in other words that what the machine tries to do is discharge its batteries and drift. But this parallel with the concept of *entropy* advanced by his contemporaries in physical science didn't arrest him; he merely remarked that the difficulty "leads to problems that are still unexamined" (*Outline* p. 109). A year before he died of cancer he was writing that we all die of the death-wish (*Outline*, p. 23).

Freud made a number of irrefragable discoveries which haven't enjoyed nearly the acclaim of his theatrical generalizations. His account of how dreams work, and where their material comes from, and their function as protectors of sleep, seems sound, whether or not it covers all dreams; and so does his investigation of the symbolizing activities of the relaxed mind. Symbols thus created aren't interesting symbols, just as the jokes dissected in *Wit and the Unconscious* aren't good jokes. Nevertheless some symbols and puns do get made in the manner

he described, and, properly scrubbed and sterilized, his descriptions make valuable instruments for investigating the highly peculiar art and literature of his own century, when writers were accustomed to let the creative faculty be hypnotized by prosodic superficialities while a florid dream-work went on beneath. Of his therapeutic achievements I am unqualified to speak. But he was unwilling not to explain the world; and the stuff of his explanation, as Dr. Jones unintentionally convinces us, was the philosophic flotsam of his time. It dates more cruelly with every decade, and the decades that swallowed it most avidly—the 20's and 30's pursuing their predilected nexus with the hothouse 90's—date today most of all.

HOWARD NEMEROV

Poetry and Life: Lord Byron¹

THE ARGUMENT ABOUT THE RELATIONS between art and life has a long and frequently tedious history; the counterpositions can be arrived at by dialectic alone and the entire debate seen as a particular reflection of the general theme having to do with immanence and transcendence, man as nature and man as spirit opposed to nature. Once the debate is seen in this way it must also be seen as the subject not of solution but choice, and the choice is always difficult; there is the golden mean, latterly called "honorable mediocrity," but perhaps for that very reason extreme positions become all the more appealing. The volumes here to be considered give us a choice of these choices, and put the general question very keenly in that neither volume is directly concerned with the poetry of Lord Byron, a knowledge and view of which is, however, assumed in one or another degree to illuminate and be illuminated by the life which is the immediate subject.

This approach has not recently been fashionable; neither has Byron's poetry, and I confess to having first gone about this review on some such line as "the return of Lord Byron"—only to discover that he had not, after all, been away: neither as a subject of study—of numerous authors writing on Byron during the past three decades I would particularly mention Harold Nicholson and Peter Quennell—, nor as the emblem of an attitude deeply and pervasively influential upon life, nor as the image of a strange heroism in whose generation

¹THE SELECTED LETTERS OF LORD BYRON, edited with an introduction by *Jacques Barzun*. Farrar, Straus and Young. \$3.75. LORD BYRON: CHRISTIAN VIRTUES, by *G. Wilson Knight*. Oxford University Press. \$6.00.

may be numbered such diverse figures as Stavrogin, Lafcadio, Tom Swift, and Tony Last reading Dickens in Brazil. All that has been forgotten, then, is the poetry, which remained—for me as, I suspect, for many others—as a memory from childhood of “She walks in beauty” and an Assyrian coming down like a wolf, together with a blurred collegiate impression of hundreds of pages of small type in double column, a format which lumped together in one indistinguishable mass many poets of the nineteenth century. So that the preparation for this review took me back to the poetry, and especially to *Don Juan*, and took me not back but for the first time to the plays, especially *Sardanapalus* and *Marino Faliero*; and all this has been an impressive experience and a source of much pleasure. At the same time it becomes clear that the study of this extraordinary life, and the study (which is not the same thing) of “Byronism” ought not to rely to any very great extent on the representations of the poetry, certainly not on the earlier poems. Childe Harold, Manfred, Lara, the Corsair and the Giaour, represent the pure efficiency of an attitude which the life shows as existing in solution with a good deal else, much of it genial and much of it the stuff of very rueful comedy. The other side, characterized by Goethe as the side of “*empeiria* and *mondanité*” (dutifully elaborated by Eckermann: “the presence of a nefarious, empirical spirit”), also appears somewhat detached and purified in the poetry, in *Mazeppa*, *Beppo*, and *Don Juan*. The last cantos of *Don Juan*, the adventures in England, do seem to represent the fullest poetical expression of Byron’s nature, but they do so digressively and at the expense of action, and the best of his poetry shows his mind acting against the institution of form. Yeats put this lucidly in *A Vision*, describing the man of the phase to which he assigned Byron: “he is doomed to attempt the destruction of all that breaks or encumbers personality, but this personality is conceived of as a fragmentary, momentary intensity.”

Early ideas of Lord Byron begin with the poetry, which they directly translate into the life; of these ideas Mario Praz (*The Romantic Agony*) gives a summary and, to a surprising degree, an example. Though he demonstrates that the “Byronic hero” is not original with Byron but comes in every detail from *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Monk* and *Zeluco*, though he quotes, on the supposed incest of Byron and Augusta, the excellent warning, “on renonce à l’interpréter comme une confidence autobiographique, quand on sait de quelle abondante littérature elle n’est que le reflet littéraire,” he nevertheless tends to see Byron as just such a Byronic hero, his necessity “le bonheur dans le crime. To destroy oneself and to destroy others.” It is on such a view that the poet’s career in England is exaggerated by earlier writers from recklessness into villainy with the aid of hints from the poetry, in order that the death at Missolonghi may be portrayed as a dramatic reversal and moral redemption, somewhat in the style of Sydney Carton.

It might be said that what modern writings on Byron chiefly add to this idea

is detail; but that is not the mere addition of quantity, for the spirit of detail is the spirit of comedy, and the portrait that emerges is, without being less dramatic, less conventionalized, broader, more inclusive and more individual—rather the novelistic than the poetic hero. Pattern, rhythm, are still reflected in this life, but criticized and given indirection no more by circumstances than by the poet's own extreme degree of irony and self-awareness. In modern biographies the *sins* of Lord Byron receive less emphasis, and his end is accordingly seen as an organic result of his character from the beginning; the drama turns on recognition rather than reversal. So Mr. Barzun writes that Byron's life is "the reverse of a tragedy . . . the flaws are not in the end obliterated, they are transcended" (though one must ask if this is not exactly the moral definition of tragedy), while G. Wilson Knight, not content with restoring the balance, goes to the other extreme, forms a counter-image to traditional Byronism, and sees a religious mystery capped by apotheosis.

Jacques Barzun's book makes available for the first time a selection of the Byron letters out of the six volumes of the *Letters and Journals* which form part of Lord Ernle's edition of *The Works of Lord Byron*, and out of the two additional volumes called *Byron's Correspondence*. This selection, which covers the whole of the poet's letter-writing days, beginning in fact with his tenth year, is so made as to give in reflection, indirectly, a continuous and fairly coherent impression of the events of Byron's life, but its chief value consists naturally in the continuous, informal and detailed indication of personality and character.

Though the two people to whom his letters are most frequently addressed are his publisher John Murray and the poet Thomas Moore, Byron is seldom and only incidentally concerned with poetry—though what he does say makes one wish he had said more—and not much oftener with publication; Murray's fidelity as a correspondent appears to have been characteristically that of a publisher, and he had to be implored several times to "send the red tooth-powder by a *safe hand* and speedily," as well as checked and rebuked on other scores: "I will have none of your cutting and slashing." Byron's letters are usually topical, anecdotal, descriptive; his descriptive powers, which constituted for him nearly the sole justification of his poems, the one ground on which he ever defended them, show up very well, whether he speaks simply as a traveler, as in the letter to his mother about Turkey, written in his twenty-first year, or as a strategist in military and political matters, as in various letters from Greece, where he also shows himself enormously capable in practical things, humorously discouraged, undeceived without being cynical: "Some of their bankers tried to make me pay interest for *my own money* in *my own possession*, which I came to spend, for their cause, too! . . . But 'I sorted them, I trow,' having the staff for the present in my own hands."

The impression which emerges from these letters is chiefly of courage, intelli-

gence, humor and generosity; also of loneliness, which makes him respond to bad situations with pride and obstinacy indeed, but always fairly, it seems, and with justification. His love of Italy, often expressed in detail, gives a tone of balance and solidity to his detestation of England and perhaps slightly theatrical feeling for the rôle of exile which is the only thing in the letters suggesting any resemblance in him to Manfred, Childe Harold and the others. His remarks on poetry, casual as they are, and betraying his active and aristocratic contempt for "scribblers"—"the pen peeping from behind the ear, and the thumbs a little inky, or so"—strike one nevertheless as modest, penetrating, and full of concern for the art. He wrote to Moore of telling Hunt, about *Rimini*, "that I deemed it good poetry at bottom, disfigured only by a strange style. His answer was that his style was a system, or *upon system*, or some such cant; and when a man talks of system, his case is hopeless. . . ." But this was not decisively his view of the matter, and to Murray he expressed his conviction that "*all* of us—Scott, Southey, Wordsworth, Moore, Campbell, I,—are all in the wrong . . . that we are upon a wrong revolutionary poetical system, or systems, not worth a damn in itself . . . and that the present and next generations will finally be of this opinion. . . . I took Moore's poems and my own, and some others, and went over them side by side with Pope's, and I was really astonished (I ought not to have been so) and mortified at the ineffable distance in point of sense, harmony, effect, and even *Imagination*, passion and *Invention*, between the little Queen Anne's Man, and us of the Lower Empire. Depend upon it, it is all Horace then, and Claudian now, among us; and if I had to begin again, I would model myself accordingly." And his assessment of his own career and quality, in a letter to Shelley in 1822, seems unusually exact as well as exacting:

As long as I write the exaggerated nonsense which has corrupted the public taste, they applauded to the very echo, and, now that I have really composed, within these three or four years, some things which shd. "not willingly be let die," the whole herd snort and grumble and return to wallow in their mire. However, it is fit I shd. pay the penalty of spoiling them, as no man has contributed more than me in my earlier compositions to produce that exaggerated and false taste. It is a fit retribution that any really classical production shd. be received as these plays have been treated.

Mr. Barzun contributes to his selection of letters an introductory essay which is a model of sense, "Byron and the Byronic in History." Here he speaks of the reductive nature of "Byronism"—"one of the poet's fictional types has engrossed his name"—, briefly describes the historical climate into which that fictional type was introduced, reminds us, as we need to be reminded, that Byron's reputation was not made by fools but by "the strongest, ablest minds" of his time, and points out that in the course of the nineteenth century "the figure of the mysterious evil-doer who is also the vindicator of justice draws to itself every important acquisition of psychology and social thought."

I think, myself, that Mr. Barzun is too sanguine in saying that the "psychic wound" of the modern artist "makes Byron's look like a scratch"—for after all there is some evidence that Byron did die of his—and that the Byronic image of freedom "ceased to have meaning . . . when the triumph of political democracy made group action possible and necessary, thereby dwarfing the value of the individual acts and rendering 'the hero' ridiculous." These judgments would strike me as simplistic in spirit even if I did not believe them wrong. But otherwise, in its description of the life, its assessment of the poetry and of certain factors standing between ourselves and the poetry, this essay is admirable.

Mr. Barzun contends that "the spectacle of such a life can only be called edifying—unless, as often happens, one confuses 'edifying' with 'blameless' and a great man with a saint." G. Wilson Knight, however, would not be satisfied to leave the matter at that; for him, Byron is "our greatest poet in the widest sense of the term since Shakespeare," and the greatness of the poetry, even so, is "outdistanced by Byron's importance as a man." Byron was "a living incarnation of a synthesis," "a third term" between "democratic conscience" and "aristocratic valuations;" finally, covering as man and poet "the whole gamut of Shakespearian passion and Shakespearian humour," he is "what might be defined as the next Promethean man in Western history after Christ."

Mr. Knight has already written an essay about Byron's poetry in *The Burning Oracle*, and about his plays in an article in the *Times Literary Supplement* (3 February, 1950). The present book, *Lord Byron: Christian Virtues*, deals directly with the life, and "is conceived as a trilogy on Byron as man and poet." The book is an unusual sort of biography, "less the story of a life than a mosaic of evidence regarding *qualities*, both the art and the argument lying rather in selection and structure than in any explicit deductions." The method, the "technique of 'spatial' analysis," "involves the massed use of materials wrenched boldly from their habitual associations and grouped about various new centres of interest, often with little or no emphasis on the temporal succession from which they have been removed; thereby being loosed from the trammels of false biographical or narrative accretion to be seen afresh *as themselves*; or, to use a famous phrase, they stand *sub specie aeternitatis*." This method will be recognized as the same that Mr. Knight has applied with such success to the Plays of Shakespeare, and, more recently, to other works.

Now I have always had the greatest admiration for the essays of Wilson Knight, and particularly those about the Plays; his style of interpretation, sensitive and vastly patient, seems to be precisely that which a good artist would hope for, not without trembling, from his reader, and which a bad artist ought to shun like the face of truth. Still, I am puzzled by this essay in biography, so difficult to read chiefly on account of "the massed use of materials" which caused the text to be constantly broken up by notes of reference, but so worth reading, so fascinating in its easy authority over an immense range of detail.

So nearly convincing, too, and if finally I must disagree it is not because the position is an extreme one, for extreme or not it is extremely well supported, but rather because I differ with Mr. Knight in some basic assumptions about the connections of art and life, so that I felt constantly and uncomfortably at odds with the book even while acknowledging the skill of the argument.

"There is something non-temporal about his story," writes Mr. Knight, "his end is implicit in his beginning; and *he therefore lends himself uniquely to the spatial approach.*" (Italics mine.) There follows a comparison linking Byron with Hamlet, Macbeth and Timon. Elsewhere we have the same dramatic, aesthetic emphasis: "He felt his life as a pattern, and tried to adjust himself to that pattern." "Teresa saw Byron as a being having attained 'perfection', and for that reason removed from earth by a death suited to his virtues. . . . Whether or not we agree, we can see Byron's death as the perfect completion to an interesting pattern of events." That "whether or not we agree" does not appear to leave much room for disagreement.

But if Byron was "a man in whom poetry became incarnate," if he was "Shakespearian drama personified," if he was also "greater than Napoleon," his intellect "Promethean rather than Napoleonic," then I must ask what was Shakespeare as a man? Or what was Napoleon as a poet? I think Mr. Knight has deliberately run together the poetry and the life and argued unjustifiably from one to the other, over-praising the poetry for the poet's "vitality", deifying the life as perfected poem: "he 'repaid' the Promethean flame to heaven not alone by words, by art, but pre-eminently by his life, and death; and the statue he moulded of its fire was, quite simply, himself." I don't find the matter that simple; Byron's life has, indeed, like most, hints of dramatic pattern, poetic order, some of these hints amply dramatized by the poet himself (the prophecy of Mrs. Williams, the Cheltenham fortune-teller, that he was to beware of his thirty-seventh year), and it is to some extent fair to say that at Missolonghi he did "live out and harmonize the most agonizing dualisms of Western civilization", though to the extent that it is fair it is also not unique or even very distinctive; but Mr. Knight ritually exalts this life at great expense to the grotesque and ludicrous side of the matter (of which Byron was acutely conscious), keen attention to which makes Harold Nicholson's *Byron: The Last Journey* so completely convincing. To a more secular view than Mr. Knight is willing to take, there is an overwhelming air of comic fiasco about the Greek venture, and it is this, not tragedy and not martyrdom, which gives it poignancy and pathos, and makes Byron's life a parable to us: the ironic spirit, laden with prophecies and dark valuations, grossly cancelled by accident, confusion, inefficiency, the mere recalcitrance which life always displays against the prospect of becoming literature. Nicholson quotes an indignant speech of Parry's against the doctors who attended on Byron in his last illness; and this, also by no means the whole truth or even

a satisfactory half, is a tone constantly affecting the picture, which Mr. Knight somewhat neglects:

Had he turned them out of doors, and returned to the habit of an English gentleman as to his diet, he would probably have survived many years, to have vindicated with his sword the wrongs of his beloved Greece, and to have heaped contempt on those pretended friends who, since his death, have vilified his glorious nature, because he could or would not believe that a lithographic press, Mr. Bentham's minute legislation, and conning over the alphabet, were the proper and most efficacious means of giving freedom and independence to that suffering and oppressed country.

This somewhat inflated tone, pompous and righteous, like that of a confidence man being straightforward, is as far from Byron's own tone as could be; yet it is constantly heard in his neighborhood, and one wonders if, after all, his presence brought out something exaggerated and false in those around him.

As for Byron's being "our greatest poet in the widest sense of the term since Shakespeare," I think Mr. Knight has confused the issues again, and this should sort out into 'a person so like a Shakespearian hero ought to be, if he writes, a Shakespearian poet.' I would tentatively mention Wordsworth and "the little Queen Anne's man," but Mr. Knight, by the phrase "in the widest sense of the term," has put this matter pretty much beyond the possibility of being argued about.

WILLIAM ARROWSMITH

Menander and Milk Wood

THE CONFIDENTIAL CLERK, by T. S. *Eliot*. Harcourt, Brace. \$3.00.

UNDER MILK WOOD, by *Dylan Thomas*. New Directions. \$3.00.

HISTORICALLY, IT WAS EURIPIDES' TRAGICOMEDIES in corruption—their artificial plots conventionalized and their poetry pushed closer and closer to the illusion of common speech—that became the basis of the New Comedy of Menander and Diphilos. Menander's *Epitrepontes*, for instance, found in Euripides' *Ion* almost all that Eliot's *The Confidential Clerk* found in it: an absurd (less absurd to Menander) but easily exploitable plot about a mislaid baby (marked out for divine sonship and service) and a group of parents hell-bent on parenthood. But in fact, Eliot's play is closer to Menander than to Euripides. Indeed, one of the very penalties for composing a play on a Euripidean plot is

that you may end up writing a play by Menander. So far as I can judge, *The Confidential Clerk* is precisely the play one might have expected from a Christian Menander: a polite, restrained, well-made piece, covertly Christian, but drained of turbulence, almost emptied of poetry, humane without much humanity. Taken with *The Cocktail Party*, it forms the extant corpus of a genre which in English dramatic tradition looks wholly new. I mean Christian New Comedy, a drawing-room drama of conversion and transfiguration whose key terms are conscious and unconscious Christian conspiracy, the putting-on of the new Adam, the adoption of God, and the intimation of the Incarnation.

In *The Confidential Clerk*, as in *The Cocktail Party*, the Christian component is neither a second plot nor a profounder "level" below the surface of the secular entertainment. Rather, it is a world of greater reality which is intended, under the pressure of poetry, to become incarnate in the secular terms of the play. We should be just enough aware of it on the fringes of our emotional field that we may sense or glimpse the transfiguration of the world of the play. Eliot has recently remarked that poetry in the theater "should be a kind of humble shadow-play or analogy of the Incarnation", and in saying this, he merely expresses his determination to adapt his technical means to his subject. The more intense moments of the play, the moments in which we catch sight of the incarnate reality, are just those moments when poetry should manifest itself in order to bear the intolerable weight of reality; only poetry could bear that weight. Thus reality supervenes in poetry and transforms the play and its persons, who are thereby "renewed, transfigured in another pattern".

That pattern is Christian, and its terms are intended to complement and perfect, or even to disannul, the terms and relations of the secular world. Thus the play's worldly quest of fathers seeking sons and sons seeking fathers is perfected or transfigured in the adoption of God ("ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father"); the doctrine of Original Sin is intended to transfigure Colby's and Sir Claude's lifelong atonement to a father; behind the concern with professions and vocation lie the Gifts of the Spirit, and with the loss of (worldly) illusions and ambitions, comes *caritas*, the greatest of the Gifts and the enabling condition of the others. "All that's left is love", says Colby, echoing Paul. He means, of course, worldly love transfigured, "expansion of love beyond desire", the same ~~it~~ that marks the putting-on of the new man, and the release of the individual and his lesser gifts from the private garden of the self into the service of others and of God. It is "with the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling" that rebirth and conversion can come: enter Athene Guzzard, *dea ex machina*, like a grizzled Easter Bunny, to hand out new lives all around. Down in Joshua Park, the lilies should be in bloom.

The play is a remarkably skillful progress from the secular "who" to the Christian "what", from appearance to reality, from love of self to love of

with the Earl of Oxford, whose family history provided the materials for a really splendid Oedipus Complex.¹ His lucid and cogent analyses of the machinery of certain mental happenings—dreaming, forgetting, recollecting, abridging and substituting—were soon submerged in his theatrical conviction that human affairs are transacted in a sort of omnipresent Venusberg. “He was apt,” writes Dr. Jones, “to be careless and imprecise in his use of terms, using, for instance, ‘perception’ as interchangeable with ‘idea’, and the like” (p. 371). He was even “ill-informed in the field of contemporary psychology and seems to have derived only from hearsay any knowledge he had of it” (p. 371). In his work, it may be maintained, a valuable core of observations and deductions got rapidly blurred and nearly smothered by increasingly wide and reckless generalizations. The early ambitious attempt to construct a complete working model of the mind, expounded by Dr. Jones at the end of the book, seems to have consisted almost entirely of terms invented to cover things he didn’t know.

Dr. Jones unintentionally makes it especially easy for us to see Freud in this way as one of the vastly influential philosophic amateurs of the 19th century, peddling his own brand of gloomy monism. His properly scientific work—the anatomizing of unconscious mental processes in pursuit of a technique for curing hysteria and other psychoses—didn’t, the biographer makes clear, come easily to him; in order to concentrate on observing something, he had to suppress a massive desire to speculate. We hear of

... a reply Freud once made to my question of how much philosophy he had read. The answer was: “Very little. As a young man I felt a strong attraction towards speculation and ruthlessly checked it.” (p. 29)

The adverb is characteristic; Freud shared the belief of his time that the man of science had to be a pretty heroic fellow, “ruthless”, “fearless”, “uncompromising”, and so on. “Nature,” he wrote of himself in 1883, “endowed me with a dauntless love of truth, the keen eye of an investigator, a rightful sense of the values of life, and the gift of working hard and finding pleasure in doing so” (p. 118). On that occasion he was on his dignity, writing beneath the eye of his betrothed. Here is a more romantic version, excerpted from an effusion to a male intimate: “I am not really a man of science, not an observer, not an experimenter, and not a thinker. I am nothing but by temperament a *conquistador* . . . with the curiosity, the boldness, and the tenacity that belongs to that type of being” (p. 348).

This volume, the first of three, takes the career of the hero only to the year

¹Though as late as 1931 he gave his imprimatur to an edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams* which adduces apropos of *Hamlet*, biographical data about the Stratford Shakespeare (*Basic Writings*, Modern Library, p. 310.)

1900, and the Freud it shows us isn't, despite these self-characterizations, the familiar figure of the later photographs, the greying Mephisto with the cigar gazing in bleak comprehension on the dismal panorama of Civilization and its Discontents. The Freud of "The Formative Years and the Great Discoveries" was a victim of "neurotic suffering and dependence", the kinks in whose soul included a melodramatic phobia of travelling by train (which he later connected with fear of losing "his home and ultimately his mother's breast"—p. 13), a lust for violent attachments (he "panted"—p. 301—for rare but compulsively necessary meetings with a rhinologist and numerologist named Fliess, to whom for some years, until a violent quarrel, he wrote weekly letters, and whose quasi-astrological jugglings with the numbers 23 and 28 he tried for years to build into the foundations of psychoanalysis); and an equally remarkable compulsion to alienate violently anyone he distrusted (about Josef Breuer, co-author of the *Studies in Hysteria*, he later used language so strong the biographer refrains from quoting it, and of his fiancée he demanded that she withdraw all affection from her mother and her brother: "—this on the grounds that they were his enemies, so that she should share his hatred of them"—p. 123). The difference between this Freud and the more familiar one Dr. Jones, like a good Freudian, ascribes to the self-analysis begun in 1897. From this "there emerged the serene and benign Freud, henceforth free to pursue his work in imperturbable composure" (p. 320).

Incipit Vita Nuova; it makes a fine climax for Volume One, and presumably by the time Volume Two comes along it will have blurred in the faithful reader's mind sufficiently to evade embarrassment. The orthodox Freudian who conceived the plot of this trilogy, however, is somewhat undercut by the chronicler who incautiously included a few glimpses of the "serene and benign" Freud of later years. The following incident, which took place in 1912, is recorded within three pages of the sentence just quoted. At a luncheon with five disciples in a Munich hotel,

. . . he began reproaching the two Swiss, Jung and Riklin, for writing articles expounding psychoanalysis in Swiss periodicals without mentioning his name. Jung replied that they had thought it unnecessary to do so, it being so well known, but Freud had sensed already the first signs of the dissension that was to follow a year later. He persisted, and I remember thinking he was taking the matter rather personally. Suddenly, to our consternation, he fell on the floor in a dead faint. The sturdy Jung swiftly carried him to a couch in the lounge, where he soon revived. His first words as he was coming to were strange: "How sweet it must be to die"—another indication that the idea of dying had some esoteric meaning for him. (p. 317)

This was fifteen years after the self-analysis started. As for his having, as we were told on p. 13, been able to "dispel" the travelling phobia by analysis, we learn on p. 305 that "he retained in later life relics of it in being so anxious

not to miss a train that he would arrive at the station a long while—even an hour—beforehand.”

In attending to trivia of this sort we are following Dr. Jones, whose *bosse professionnel* is an almost comic preoccupation with anything that would ordinarily pass as too petty for extensive remark.² We are told that the hero still wet his bed at the age of two (p. 7), and once urinated in his parents' bedroom at the age of seven (p. 16); that matches in Paris in 1885 cost him a whole penny a box (p. 184), and that he applied chemical tests to the green curtains in his hotel bedroom there “to make sure they did not contain arsenic” (p. 183); that twenty years after his first piece of laboratory work, an inconclusive investigation of the gonadic structure of eels, he bore a faint grudge against the teacher who had set him a task in which he could not make “some brilliant and original discovery”³ (p. 38); that an overseer he disliked was exactly the age of his half-brother, “the imagined rival with his mother in early childhood”, while one he admired was a contemporary of “his omniscient and beloved father” (p. 39). This half-brother is the theme of one of the funniest paragraphs in the book, the one that deals with the two-year-old Freud's growing suspicion “that some man was even more intimate with his mother than he was” (p. 14). A baby, the infant Hercules noted, was on the way; “jealousy of the intruder, and anger for whoever had seduced his mother into this unfaithful proceeding, were inevitable. Discarding his knowledge of the sleeping conditions in the house, he rejected the thought that the nefarious person could be his beloved and perfect father.” So he elected to hate the half-brother; and “his intelligence was given a task from which he never flinched until, forty years later, he found the solution in a fashion that made his name immortal.”

Dr. Jones is of course quite insensitive to the inherent comedy of these solemn remarks. The Freudians, most readers must have noticed, are funnier than Freud, though the Master, with his usual penchant for overplaying his hand, did psychoanalyse Moses, and did commit himself to the view that small boys want to be engine-drivers because of the sexual stimulation afforded by “shaking sensations experienced in wagons and railroad trains” (*Basic Writings*, p. 600). His American translator, Dr. Brill, unsmilingly relates the case of a scopophiliac who “was able to *sublimate* the tendency for perverse looking” by becoming a dealer in optical instruments (*Basic Writings*, p. 18) and gives us an equally Flaubertian image of conversation at the staff dinnertable of the Burghölzli Clinic in Zurich:

²Though Mr. Paul Goodman in the *Kenyon Review* (Winter 1954) complains that the early part of the book is skimpy: “Jones mentions not a word about toilet-habits and there is no history of masturbation or its absence.”

³Dr. Jones' footnote is worth reproducing: “One is tempted to make the perhaps irrelevant remark that the future discoverer of the castration complex was disappointed at not being able to find the testes of the eel.”

No one could make a slip of any kind without immediately being called on to evoke free associations to explain it. It did not matter that women were present—wives and female voluntary internes—who might have curbed the frankness usually produced by free associations. The women were just as keen to discover the concealed mechanisms as their husbands. (*Basic Writings*, p. 27)

This, plainly, is a sort of comedy not covered by Freud's celebrated analysis, since no unconscious energy is being liberated. Its principle is the unwitting disclosure of a monomania. The only thing of which Dr. Jones, for instance, appears to be unconscious is the extravagance of his admiration for his subject. He is more objective than Freud's other intimates, he tells us; "my own hero-worshipping propensities had been worked through before I encountered him" (p. xiii). Yet with the warmth of Bouvard commending Pécuchet he shakes his head in dignified admiration whenever the Master opens his mouth or sets pen to paper. The letters Freud wrote to his betrothed "would be a not unworthy contribution to the great love-literature of the world. The style is at times reminiscent of Goethe"⁴ (p. 99). Of Freud's touristic descriptions of the various cities he visited ("Brussels was wonderfully beautiful, an enormous town with splendid buildings. . .") he remarks on the "unusually keen powers of observation" and announces their separate publication (p. 182). His portentiousness has a flavour all its own. Freud's fantasy of reproaching the Almighty for not giving him a better brain was "the remark of a man not easily satisfied" (p. 35). His ritual of devoting the last half-hour of every day to further self-analysis was "one more example of his flawless integrity" (p. 327). When he forsook physiology for psychology "the struggle must have been titanic" (p. 286). Of "his most heroic feat—a psychoanalysis of his own unconscious", Dr. Jones remarks with fatuous awe, "no one again can be the first to explore those depths" (p. 319).

Behind these gaucheries lies the reason for the extraordinary fascination of this book. Through a lucky combination of professional solemnity and professional regard for minutiae, Dr. Jones has given us all the material we need to see Freud embedded in his time and place, pursuing a representative 19th century career. The nonconformists of that age—Flaubert, Ibsen, and, in his special way, James Joyce, are familiar examples—seem to have been locked into a biographical pattern possessing a number of standard elements. These are (1) a youth distinguished by both emotional turmoil and devotion to an ideal of thoroughness (Cf. Dodgson and Carroll; Freud performed a number of apparently unimpeachable pieces of physiological research); (2) a period of stormy

⁴"Woe to you, my Princess, when I come. I will kiss you quite red and feed you till you are plump. And if you are forward you shall see who is the stronger, a gentle little girl who doesn't eat enough or a big wild man *who has cocaine in his body*." We are cautioned that much is lost in translation, though "Meine geliebte Braut. Soweit das Schreiben. Was nun folgt ist Umschreibung" is offered in illustration of their evanescent humour.

relationships with other people, characterized by a loud insistence on utter and complete understanding which is always getting snagged on the unwillingness of the other people to be taken possession of in that fashion; (3) a phase, setting in at about the fortieth year, in which the life-work ruthlessly pursued erupts suddenly into publicity and bourgeois scandal; and (4), immediately thereafter, a prolonged middle age during which, from behind a mask of majestic indifference, the hero, all passion supposedly spent, watches himself being turned into an institution. This last phase—Joyce in Paris, Flaubert coaching Maupassant, Ibsen returned from exile—is too common a feature of the *Heldenleben* to require the adduction of a Freudian self-analysis in explanation.

Nothing is more "period", for instance, than Freud's passion, so impressive to Dr. Jones, for threshing matters out. The theme of the long chapter about the four-year betrothal is "His hatred for half-measures and his determination to probe the truth to the bitter end, however bitter" (p. 123). The end, in those days, was always supposed to be bitter. "Their relationship must be quite perfect; the slightest blur was not to be tolerated" (p. 110). Having sent Martha's mother a tart letter, he wrote Martha, "I have put a good deal more of my wrath in cold storage which will be dished up some day. I am young, tenacious and active; I shall pay all my debts, including this one" (p. 123). Dr. Jones should not ask us to suppose that in reading passages like these we have a finger on the pulse of Freud's genius; what throbs through the pages in question is the shiny brass engine of 19th century implacable rectitude. The identical beat is discernible in many speeches from *Exiles*, which is about this state of mind, or in Ibsen's letters to his sister Hedvig. Freud's conception of human relations was rather provincial than otherwise, and this thirst—masquerading as a love of sincerity—for subduing other people's wills to his own, was exaggerated by the social climate of bourgeois Austria, where no mean seems to have been conceivable between utter repudiation of another's right to existence and standing on his feet while breathing protestations of friendship into his face. Here is part of the saga of Fritz, who trifled with Martha's affections:

Then Fritz called for pen and paper, and wrote a letter to her on the spot. Freud insisted on reading it, and it made the blood rush to his head. . . . Freud tore the letter in pieces, at which Fritz left in mortification. They followed him and tried to bring him to his senses, but he only broke down in tears. This softened Freud, whose own eyes became moist; he seized his friend's arm and escorted him home. But the next morning a harder mood supervened, and he felt ashamed of his weakness. "The man who brings tears to my eyes must do a great deal before I forgive him. I am made of harder stuff than he is, and when we match each other he will find he is not my equal." . . . (p. 112)

Every fact supplied by the biographer confirms Wyndham Lewis's judgment of 25 years ago, that Freud's is "the psychology appropriate to a highly com-

munized patriarchal society in which *the family* and its close relationship is an intense obsession, and the obscene familiarities of a closely-packed communal sex-life a family joke, as it were" (*The Enemy*, No. II, p. 68). He seems never to have questioned the universality of the family customs and practices of bourgeois Mittel-Europa. For instance, the severest trauma of a small boy's life, "the central experience of the years of childhood, the greatest problem of early life and the most important source of later inadequacy" depends on his mother threatening him with castration as a disciplinary measure; and Freud as late as 1938 seems to have thought that the practice of issuing this threat was as universal as the practice of breathing. By the nature of psychoanalytic theory, once a practitioner gets an idea like this into his head, nothing can get it out; patients who protest that it never happened to them merely illustrate the way the event is "so completely forgotten that its reconstruction during the work of analysis is met by the adult's most determined scepticism" (*Outline of Psychoanalysis*, p. 95).

"I always find it uncanny when I can't understand someone in terms of myself," Freud wrote in 1882 (p. 320). To this romantic subjectivism, reinforced by the Mitteleuropian norm of hysterical oscillation between coldness and intimacy and by the German-idealist emphasis on the will as the only thing real or meaningful, we have only to add the Helmholtzian tradition of scientific determinism, in which Freud was trained and which he never forsook, to arrive at a working model of both the man and his doctrines.

"Like most adolescents Freud had the need to 'believe in something', and in his case the something was Science with a capital" (p. 40). This religion, which he shared with so many eminent Victorians, came to him in a form "deeply imbued with the principles of causality and determinism, so pronounced in the Helmholtz school that had dominated his early scientific discipline" (p. 245). The moment we can imagine this faith placed at the service of his preoccupation with how people felt about other people—especially about him—we have the key to his severe pursuit of trivia, his stern determination that the verbal slip you uttered in his presence, or the name he was himself unable to remember (for he was as hard on himself as on anyone) *meant something*. And of course his "passion for threshing things out" intervened on the spot. We shall *have this out*, here and now! And since "he never abandoned determinism for teleology" (p. 45), the meaning of the slip which you persisted in treating so lightly lay in the past. Backwards, then, the threads of "free association" were to be traced, if necessary back to the cradle. The instant unbroken trains of rigid causality are posited, one is committed to saying that the events that control one's behaviour now occurred in remote infancy. It was Freud's distinction that he pursued these consequences with fanaticism to the end. (He even thought of pursuing them beyond the womb; in a footnote to a chapter on the Oedipus Complex we read, "The possibility cannot be excluded that a

phylogenetic memory-trace may contribute to the extra-ordinarily terrifying effect of the threat [of castration]—a memory-trace from the prehistory of the human family, when the jealous father would actually rob his son of his genitals if the latter interfered with him in rivalry for a woman.” Though we have no record of this jealous cave-man, we have Freud’s assurance that “dreams offer a source of human prehistory which is not to be despised.” The Darwinian view that ontogeny repeats phylogeny was another premise he never forsook (*Outline of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 92, 50).

Freud’s philosophical achievement—like that of a chess-master who contrives an impregnable opening—was to combine the ambient premises of 19th century continental pessimism into the most impenetrable of orthodoxies. By transforming Schopenhauer’s “will” into “the unconscious” he placed the whole complex of interdependent doctrines beyond discussion. The axioms of psychoanalysis are not statements about things in general, nor about a sort of Lockean working model to be considered with dispassion, but statements about *you*; and when you question one of them the Freudian cocks a caustic eyebrow and enquires into your motives for evading self-knowledge. Discussion, for that matter, always nettled Freud, whether because he took it as a personal affront or because he recognized the futility of its attempts to penetrate the machine he had constructed. At any rate, in deference to his wishes, it has always been forbidden at Psychoanalytic Congresses. His last book begins with the tart warning that the teachings of psychoanalysis “are based upon an incalculable number of observations and experiences, and no one who has not repeated those observations upon himself or upon others is in a position to arrive at an independent judgment of it” (*Outline*, p. 9). In another late work he says that “the recognition we afford to sexuality is—whether they confess it or not—the strongest motive for our opponents’ hostility to psychoanalysis. But are we to let ourselves be shaken on that account? It only shows us how neurotic our whole culture is, when apparently normal people behave no differently than neurotics” (*The Question of Lay Analysis*, p. 54). So the mere enquirer hasn’t a chance. Neither had associates. Breuer, when his feet cooled on the threshold of Venusberg, was hurled amid maledictions into limbo. Jung was excommunicated (or severed himself; accounts differ. Volume II may be expected to throw light on that mysterious affair).

From subsequent volumes, too, we may expect to learn more about the extraordinary spread of Freud’s doctrines. It was of course to be expected that a body of statements so involuted as to be capable of absorbing, like a Venus Fly-trap, the enquirer who perches on the rim of its most peripheral conclusions, would achieve a sort of underground popularity, especially among individuals anxious to appear interesting to themselves. And the constant incitement to introspection (since you cannot safely examine your neighbour’s unconscious) has led many readers into a process of self-examination so inexact

it would convince them that all their dreams were symbolically related to elephants, if that was what they had been told they would find. Again, the British literary and artistic avant-garde of the 20's and 30's constituted a powerful engine of publicity. Nothing gives the "feel" of that period more vividly today than the plexus of notions its languid literati were absorbing. It seemed pleasant, apparently, to be told that your inability to rival Michaelangelo was the result of a neurosis, or that the trivialities that flicker at the threshold of a consciousness that isn't attending to anything were the forked tips of subterranean flames. No one, in that milieu, seems to have found the unconscious *dull*, though a glance at the files of, say, *Transition* will convince us that nothing is deader than "automatic writing" and no one drearier than a synthetic primitive. There is no Poe-esque energy in those morbid dungeons beneath the stratum of conscious life: nothing but the same dreary Oedipus Complex, universally distributed. Freud's Id, one would think, could inspire a *frisson* in nobody. Perhaps it was modish to despise *frisson*; the Freudian years in Anglo-Saxonry were the enervated decades of ("yes, oh dear yes") Forster and Mrs. Woolf.

For Freud the conscious part of the mind does nothing but mediate between the monotonous demands of the Id and an external reality which can be called "real" only by courtesy: an external world whose phenomena manifest only two sorts of character—either they comply readily with the Id, or they don't. There is no question of the mind *knowing* them, or of its life drawing nourishment from their intelligible species. Rather, there may be such questions, but Freud isn't interested; and so interlocked are his expositions that he soon gives the impression of ignoring their existence. His is a world in which, ultimately, nothing possesses any interest at all, except for the sort of tumid interest people can always derive from themselves.

It nettled him a little that "the pleasure principle requires a reduction, or perhaps ultimately the extinction, of the tension of the instinctual needs (that is, a state of *Nirvana*)": in other words that what the machine tries to do is discharge its batteries and drift. But this parallel with the concept of *entropy* advanced by his contemporaries in physical science didn't arrest him; he merely remarked that the difficulty "leads to problems that are still unexamined" (*Outline* p. 109). A year before he died of cancer he was writing that we all die of the death-wish (*Outline*, p. 23).

Freud made a number of irrefragable discoveries which haven't enjoyed nearly the acclaim of his theatrical generalizations. His account of how dreams work, and where their material comes from, and their function as protectors of sleep, seems sound, whether or not it covers all dreams; and so does his investigation of the symbologizing activities of the relaxed mind. Symbols thus created aren't interesting symbols, just as the jokes dissected in *Wit and the Unconscious* aren't good jokes. Nevertheless some symbols and puns do get made in the manner

he described, and, properly scrubbed and sterilized, his descriptions make valuable instruments for investigating the highly peculiar art and literature of his own century, when writers were accustomed to let the creative faculty be hypnotized by prosodic superficialities while a florid dream-work went on beneath. Of his therapeutic achievements I am unqualified to speak. But he was unwilling not to explain the world; and the stuff of his explanation, as Dr. Jones unintentionally convinces us, was the philosophic flotsam of his time. It dates more cruelly with every decade, and the decades that swallowed it most avidly—the 20's and 30's pursuing their predilected nexus with the hothouse 90's—date today most of all.

HOWARD NEMEROV

Poetry and Life: Lord Byron¹

THE ARGUMENT ABOUT THE RELATIONS between art and life has a long and frequently tedious history; the counterpositions can be arrived at by dialectic alone and the entire debate seen as a particular reflection of the general theme having to do with immanence and transcendence, man as nature and man as spirit opposed to nature. Once the debate is seen in this way it must also be seen as the subject not of solution but choice, and the choice is always difficult; there is the golden mean, latterly called "honorable mediocrity," but perhaps for that very reason extreme positions become all the more appealing. The volumes here to be considered give us a choice of these choices, and put the general question very keenly in that neither volume is directly concerned with the poetry of Lord Byron, a knowledge and view of which is, however, assumed in one or another degree to illuminate and be illuminated by the life which is the immediate subject.

This approach has not recently been fashionable; neither has Byron's poetry, and I confess to having first gone about this review on some such line as "the return of Lord Byron"—only to discover that he had not, after all, been away: neither as a subject of study—of numerous authors writing on Byron during the past three decades I would particularly mention Harold Nicholson and Peter Quennell—, nor as the emblem of an attitude deeply and pervasively influential upon life, nor as the image of a strange heroism in whose generation

¹THE SELECTED LETTERS OF LORD BYRON, edited with an introduction by *Jacques Barzun*. Farrar, Straus and Young. \$3.75. LORD BYRON: CHRISTIAN VIRTUES, by *G. Wilson Knight*. Oxford University Press. \$6.00.

may be numbered such diverse figures as Stavrogin, Lafcadio, Tom Swift, and Tony Last reading Dickens in Brazil. All that has been forgotten, then, is the poetry, which remained—for me as, I suspect, for many others—as a memory from childhood of “She walks in beauty” and an Assyrian coming down like a wolf, together with a blurred collegiate impression of hundreds of pages of small type in double column, a format which lumped together in one indistinguishable mass many poets of the nineteenth century. So that the preparation for this review took me back to the poetry, and especially to *Don Juan*, and took me not back but for the first time to the plays, especially *Sardanapalus* and *Marino Faliero*; and all this has been an impressive experience and a source of much pleasure. At the same time it becomes clear that the study of this extraordinary life, and the study (which is not the same thing) of “Byronism” ought not to rely to any very great extent on the representations of the poetry, certainly not on the earlier poems. Childe Harold, Manfred, Lara, the Corsair and the Giaour, represent the pure efficiency of an attitude which the life shows as existing in solution with a good deal else, much of it genial and much of it the stuff of very rueful comedy. The other side, characterized by Goethe as the side of “*empeiria* and *mondanité*” (dutifully elaborated by Eckermann: “the presence of a nefarious, empirical spirit”), also appears somewhat detached and purified in the poetry, in *Mazeppa*, *Beppo*, and *Don Juan*. The last cantos of *Don Juan*, the adventures in England, do seem to represent the fullest poetical expression of Byron’s nature, but they do so digressively and at the expense of action, and the best of his poetry shows his mind acting against the institution of form. Yeats put this lucidly in *A Vision*, describing the man of the phase to which he assigned Byron: “he is doomed to attempt the destruction of all that breaks or encumbers personality, but this personality is conceived of as a fragmentary, momentary intensity.”

Early ideas of Lord Byron begin with the poetry, which they directly translate into the life; of these ideas Mario Praz (*The Romantic Agony*) gives a summary and, to a surprising degree, an example. Though he demonstrates that the “Byronic hero” is not original with Byron but comes in every detail from *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Monk* and *Zeluco*, though he quotes, on the supposed incest of Byron and Augusta, the excellent warning, “on renonce à l’interpréter comme une confidence autobiographique, quand on sait de quelle abondante littérature elle n’est que le reflet littéraire,” he nevertheless tends to see Byron as just such a Byronic hero, his necessity “le bonheur dans le crime. To destroy oneself and to destroy others.” It is on such a view that the poet’s career in England is exaggerated by earlier writers from recklessness into villainy with the aid of hints from the poetry, in order that the death at Missolonghi may be portrayed as a dramatic reversal and moral redemption, somewhat in the style of Sydney Carton.

It might be said that what modern writings on Byron chiefly add to this idea

is detail; but that is not the mere addition of quantity, for the spirit of detail is the spirit of comedy, and the portrait that emerges is, without being less dramatic, less conventionalized, broader, more inclusive and more individual—rather the novelistic than the poetic hero. Pattern, rhythm, are still reflected in this life, but criticized and given indirection no more by circumstances than by the poet's own extreme degree of irony and self-awareness. In modern biographies the *sins* of Lord Byron receive less emphasis, and his end is accordingly seen as an organic result of his character from the beginning; the drama turns on recognition rather than reversal. So Mr. Barzun writes that Byron's life is "the reverse of a tragedy . . . the flaws are not in the end obliterated, they are transcended" (though one must ask if this is not exactly the moral definition of tragedy), while G. Wilson Knight, not content with restoring the balance, goes to the other extreme, forms a counter-image to traditional Byronism, and sees a religious mystery capped by apotheosis.

Jacques Barzun's book makes available for the first time a selection of the Byron letters out of the six volumes of the *Letters and Journals* which form part of Lord Ernle's edition of *The Works of Lord Byron*, and out of the two additional volumes called *Byron's Correspondence*. This selection, which covers the whole of the poet's letter-writing days, beginning in fact with his tenth year, is so made as to give in reflection, indirectly, a continuous and fairly coherent impression of the events of Byron's life, but its chief value consists naturally in the continuous, informal and detailed indication of personality and character.

Though the two people to whom his letters are most frequently addressed are his publisher John Murray and the poet Thomas Moore, Byron is seldom and only incidentally concerned with poetry—though what he does say makes one wish he had said more—and not much oftener with publication; Murray's fidelity as a correspondent appears to have been characteristically that of a publisher, and he had to be implored several times to "send the red tooth-powder by a *safe hand* and speedily," as well as checked and rebuked on other scores: "I will have none of your cutting and slashing." Byron's letters are usually topical, anecdotal, descriptive; his descriptive powers, which constituted for him nearly the sole justification of his poems, the one ground on which he ever defended them, show up very well, whether he speaks simply as a traveler, as in the letter to his mother about Turkey, written in his twenty-first year, or as a strategist in military and political matters, as in various letters from Greece, where he also shows himself enormously capable in practical things, humorously discouraged, undeceived without being cynical: "Some of their bankers tried to make me pay interest for *my own money* in *my own possession*, which I came to spend, for their cause, too! . . . But 'I sorted them, I trow,' having the staff for the present in my own hands."

The impression which emerges from these letters is chiefly of courage, intelli-

gence, humor and generosity; also of loneliness, which makes him respond to bad situations with pride and obstinacy indeed, but always fairly, it seems, and with justification. His love of Italy, often expressed in detail, gives a tone of balance and solidity to his detestation of England and perhaps slightly theatrical feeling for the rôle of exile which is the only thing in the letters suggesting any resemblance in him to Manfred, Childe Harold and the others. His remarks on poetry, casual as they are, and betraying his active and aristocratic contempt for "scribblers"—"the pen peeping from behind the ear, and the thumbs a little inky, or so"—strike one nevertheless as modest, penetrating, and full of concern for the art. He wrote to Moore of telling Hunt, about *Rimini*, "that I deemed it good poetry at bottom, disfigured only by a strange style. His answer was that his style was a system, or *upon system*, or some such cant; and when a man talks of system, his case is hopeless. . . ." But this was not decisively his view of the matter, and to Murray he expressed his conviction that "*all* of us—Scott, Southey, Wordsworth, Moore, Campbell, I,—are all in the wrong . . . that we are upon a wrong revolutionary poetical system, or systems, not worth a damn in itself . . . and that the present and next generations will finally be of this opinion. . . . I took Moore's poems and my own, and some others, and went over them side by side with Pope's, and I was really astonished (I ought not to have been so) and mortified at the ineffable distance in point of sense, harmony, effect, and even *Imagination*, passion and *Invention*, between the little Queen Anne's Man, and us of the Lower Empire. Depend upon it, it is all Horace then, and Claudian now, among us; and if I had to begin again, I would model myself accordingly." And his assessment of his own career and quality, in a letter to Shelley in 1822, seems unusually exact as well as exacting:

As long as I write the exaggerated nonsense which has corrupted the public taste, they applauded to the very echo, and, now that I have really composed, within these three or four years, some things which shd. "not willingly be let die," the whole herd snort and grumble and return to wallow in their mire. However, it is fit I shd. pay the penalty of spoiling them, as no man has contributed more than me in my earlier compositions to produce that exaggerated and false taste. It is a fit retribution that any really classical production shd. be received as these plays have been treated.

Mr. Barzun contributes to his selection of letters an introductory essay which is a model of sense, "Byron and the Byronic in History." Here he speaks of the reductive nature of "Byronism"—"one of the poet's fictional types has engrossed his name"—, briefly describes the historical climate into which that fictional type was introduced, reminds us, as we need to be reminded, that Byron's reputation was not made by fools but by "the strongest, ablest minds" of his time, and points out that in the course of the nineteenth century "the figure of the mysterious evil-doer who is also the vindicator of justice draws to itself every important acquisition of psychology and social thought."

I think, myself, that Mr. Barzun is too sanguine in saying that the "psychic wound" of the modern artist "makes Byron's look like a scratch"—for after all there is some evidence that Byron did die of his—and that the Byronic image of freedom "ceased to have meaning . . . when the triumph of political democracy made group action possible and necessary, thereby dwarfing the value of the individual acts and rendering 'the hero' ridiculous." These judgments would strike me as simplistic in spirit even if I did not believe them wrong. But otherwise, in its description of the life, its assessment of the poetry and of certain factors standing between ourselves and the poetry, this essay is admirable.

Mr. Barzun contends that "the spectacle of such a life can only be called edifying—unless, as often happens, one confuses 'edifying' with 'blameless' and a great man with a saint." G. Wilson Knight, however, would not be satisfied to leave the matter at that; for him, Byron is "our greatest poet in the widest sense of the term since Shakespeare," and the greatness of the poetry, even so, is "outdistanced by Byron's importance as a man." Byron was "a living incarnation of a synthesis," "a third term" between "democratic conscience" and "aristocratic valuations;" finally, covering as man and poet "the whole gamut of Shakespearian passion and Shakespearian humour," he is "what might be defined as the next Promethean man in Western history after Christ."

Mr. Knight has already written an essay about Byron's poetry in *The Burning Oracle*, and about his plays in an article in the *Times Literary Supplement* (3 February, 1950). The present book, *Lord Byron: Christian Virtues*, deals directly with the life, and "is conceived as a trilogy on Byron as man and poet." The book is an unusual sort of biography, "less the story of a life than a mosaic of evidence regarding *qualities*, both the art and the argument lying rather in selection and structure than in any explicit deductions." The method, the "technique of 'spatial' analysis," "involves the massed use of materials wrenched boldly from their habitual associations and grouped about various new centres of interest, often with little or no emphasis on the temporal succession from which they have been removed; thereby being loosed from the trammels of false biographical or narrative accretion to be seen afresh as *themselves*; or, to use a famous phrase, they stand *sub specie aeternitatis*." This method will be recognized as the same that Mr. Knight has applied with such success to the Plays of Shakespeare, and, more recently, to other works.

Now I have always had the greatest admiration for the essays of Wilson Knight, and particularly those about the Plays; his style of interpretation, sensitive and vastly patient, seems to be precisely that which a good artist would hope for, not without trembling, from his reader, and which a bad artist ought to shun like the face of truth. Still, I am puzzled by this essay in biography, so difficult to read chiefly on account of "the massed use of materials" which caused the text to be constantly broken up by notes of reference, but so worth reading, so fascinating in its easy authority over an immense range of detail.

So nearly convincing, too, and if finally I must disagree it is not because the position is an extreme one, for extreme or not it is extremely well supported, but rather because I differ with Mr. Knight in some basic assumptions about the connections of art and life, so that I felt constantly and uncomfortably at odds with the book even while acknowledging the skill of the argument.

"There is something non-temporal about his story," writes Mr. Knight, "his end is implicit in his beginning; and *he therefore lends himself uniquely to the spatial approach.*" (Italics mine.) There follows a comparison linking Byron with Hamlet, Macbeth and Timon. Elsewhere we have the same dramatic, aesthetic emphasis: "He felt his life as a pattern, and tried to adjust himself to that pattern." "Teresa saw Byron as a being having attained 'perfection', and for that reason removed from earth by a death suited to his virtues. . . . Whether or not we agree, we can see Byron's death as the perfect completion to an interesting pattern of events." That "whether or not we agree" does not appear to leave much room for disagreement.

But if Byron was "a man in whom poetry became incarnate," if he was "Shakespearian drama personified," if he was also "greater than Napoleon," his intellect "Promethean rather than Napoleonic," then I must ask what was Shakespeare as a man? Or what was Napoleon as a poet? I think Mr. Knight has deliberately run together the poetry and the life and argued unjustifiably from one to the other, over-praising the poetry for the poet's "vitality", deifying the life as perfected poem: "he 'repaid' the Promethean flame to heaven not alone by words, by art, but pre-eminently by his life, and death; and the statue he moulded of its fire was, quite simply, himself." I don't find the matter that simple; Byron's life has, indeed, like most, hints of dramatic pattern, poetic order, some of these hints amply dramatized by the poet himself (the prophecy of Mrs. Williams, the Cheltenham fortune-teller, that he was to beware of his thirty-seventh year), and it is to some extent fair to say that at Missolonghi he did "live out and harmonize the most agonizing dualisms of Western civilization", though to the extent that it is fair it is also not unique or even very distinctive; but Mr. Knight ritually exalts this life at great expense to the grotesque and ludicrous side of the matter (of which Byron was acutely conscious), keen attention to which makes Harold Nicholson's *Byron: The Last Journey* so completely convincing. To a more secular view than Mr. Knight is willing to take, there is an overwhelming air of comic fiasco about the Greek venture, and it is this, not tragedy and not martyrdom, which gives it poignancy and pathos, and makes Byron's life a parable to us: the ironic spirit, laden with prophecies and dark valuations, grossly cancelled by accident, confusion, inefficiency, the mere recalcitrance which life always displays against the prospect of becoming literature. Nicholson quotes an indignant speech of Parry's against the doctors who attended on Byron in his last illness; and this, also by no means the whole truth or even

a satisfactory half, is a tone constantly affecting the picture, which Mr. Knight somewhat neglects:

Had he turned them out of doors, and returned to the habit of an English gentleman as to his diet, he would probably have survived many years, to have vindicated with his sword the wrongs of his beloved Greece, and to have heaped contempt on those pretended friends who, since his death, have vilified his glorious nature, because he could or would not believe that a lithographic press, Mr. Bentham's minute legislation, and conning over the alphabet, were the proper and most efficacious means of giving freedom and independence to that suffering and oppressed country.

This somewhat inflated tone, pompous and righteous, like that of a confidence man being straightforward, is as far from Byron's own tone as could be; yet it is constantly heard in his neighborhood, and one wonders if, after all, his presence brought out something exaggerated and false in those around him.

As for Byron's being "our greatest poet in the widest sense of the term since Shakespeare," I think Mr. Knight has confused the issues again, and this should sort out into 'a person so like a Shakespearian hero ought to be, if he writes, a Shakespearian poet.' I would tentatively mention Wordsworth and "the little Queen Anne's man," but Mr. Knight, by the phrase "in the widest sense of the term," has put this matter pretty much beyond the possibility of being argued about.

WILLIAM ARROWSMITH

Menander and Milk Wood

THE CONFIDENTIAL CLERK, by *T. S. Eliot*. Harcourt, Brace. \$3.00.

UNDER MILK WOOD, by *Dylan Thomas*. New Directions. \$3.00.

HISTORICALLY, IT WAS EURIPIDES' TRAGICOMEDIES in corruption—their artificial plots conventionalized and their poetry pushed closer and closer to the illusion of common speech—that became the basis of the New Comedy of Menander and Diphilos. Menander's *Epitrepontes*, for instance, found in Euripides' *Ion* almost all that Eliot's *The Confidential Clerk* found in it: an absurd (less absurd to Menander) but easily exploitable plot about a mislaid baby (marked out for divine sonship and service) and a group of parents hell-bent on parenthood. But in fact, Eliot's play is closer to Menander than to Euripides. Indeed, one of the very penalties for composing a play on a Euripidean plot is

that you may end up writing a play by Menander. So far as I can judge, *The Confidential Clerk* is precisely the play one might have expected from a Christian Menander: a polite, restrained, well-made piece, covertly Christian, but drained of turbulence, almost emptied of poetry, humane without much humanity. Taken with *The Cocktail Party*, it forms the extant corpus of a genre which in English dramatic tradition looks wholly new. I mean Christian New Comedy, a drawing-room drama of conversion and transfiguration whose key terms are conscious and unconscious Christian conspiracy, the putting-on of the new Adam, the adoption of God, and the intimation of the Incarnation.

In *The Confidential Clerk*, as in *The Cocktail Party*, the Christian component is neither a second plot nor a profounder "level" below the surface of the secular entertainment. Rather, it is a world of greater reality which is intended, under the pressure of poetry, to become incarnate in the secular terms of the play. We should be just enough aware of it on the fringes of our emotional field that we may sense or glimpse the transfiguration of the world of the play. Eliot has recently remarked that poetry in the theater "should be a kind of humble shadow-play or analogy of the Incarnation", and in saying this, he merely expresses his determination to adapt his technical means to his subject. The more intense moments of the play, the moments in which we catch sight of the incarnate reality, are just those moments when poetry should manifest itself in order to bear the intolerable weight of reality; only poetry could bear that weight. Thus reality supervenes in poetry and transforms the play and its persons, who are thereby "renewed, transfigured in another pattern".

That pattern is Christian, and its terms are intended to complement and perfect, or even to disannul, the terms and relations of the secular world. Thus the play's worldly quest of fathers seeking sons and sons seeking fathers is perfected or transfigured in the adoption of God ("ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father"); the doctrine of Original Sin is intended to transfigure Colby's and Sir Claude's lifelong atonement to a father; behind the concern with professions and vocation lie the Gifts of the Spirit, and with the loss of (worldly) illusions and ambitions, comes *caritas*, the greatest of the Gifts and the enabling condition of the others. "All that's left is love", says Colby, echoing Paul. He means, of course, worldly love transfigured, "expansion of love beyond desire", the same ~~love~~ that marks the putting-on of the new man, and the release of the individual and his lesser gifts from the private garden of the self into the service of others and of God. It is "with the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling" that rebirth and conversion can come: enter Athene Guzzard, *dea ex machina*, like a grizzled Easter Bunny, to hand out new lives all around. Down in Joshua Park, the lilies should be in bloom.

The play is a remarkably skillful progress from the secular "who" to the Christian "what", from appearance to reality, from love of self to love of

others. In terms of its intent, if I judge that intent rightly, it is structurally an extraordinary play, far superior to its predecessor. But regretfully I must doubt whether all the skill in the world could quite redeem this play from the impoverishment at the very heart of its conception. My guess is that it could be redeemed only by the exercise of love and loving language, both of which are gifts that Mr. Eliot possesses, but which for doctrinal and strategic reasons he has here either suppressed or allowed to be suppressed. I am not, of course, imputing to Eliot the crudity of thinking that doctrine can redeem a dull play, or that a well-made play can redeem an intolerable doctrine. What I object to is the fact that, in the very act of composition, his doctrine has stultified the world, stripped it of dignity to such a point that the intended transfiguration is simply belittled. There is so little here to be transfigured. And just as it is the great sinners who make the most interesting saints, so I should have supposed it was the liveliest illusions that got most firmly transfigured. What we have instead is the spectacle of religious, without dramatic, redemption; of the new man without the old Adam; of transfigured love without the love it was transfigured from. Yet it stands to reason that illumination requires a darkness to dispel, just as Incarnation needs a world of flesh. And, of course, both the real world and the actual world are none the worse off for access to a little poetry, and surely more than they receive here.

I suspect that the effective reason for the impoverishment of the world is doctrinal. In Christianity, you can view, say, the relation to a human father and a divine father in two ways; either the divine relation is a *perfection* of the human one, or a *renunciation* of the human. In Eliot's play, the adoption of God is achieved through the annihilation of human paternity, just as *caritas* comes, less as a perfection than as a destruction of wordly love. In the same way, the whole play constantly hints that if you go far enough in stripping away the wordly qualities in a man, you will eventually come upon the substantial Christian: Christ is where the world is not. The consequences of this gnostic denial of the reality of the world seem to me disastrous for drama; it prohibits Eliot, for instance, from giving even partial reality to the *illusions* of the world. How easily, after all, these people surrender their illusions of parental love; how little dignity of language they have in which to report the love and grief we are meant to credit them with. "Poor Claude!" is the only comment Lady Elizabeth can give to a man who has just lost what his whole life wanted: a son. It is precisely because his illusions are left without real dignity that his loss of illusions doesn't matter. And yet, in the play, it is via the loss of his illusions and ambitions that he is supposed to come on Christian love. I find this both cold comfort as achieved and very hard to credit.

Colby is meant to be somewhat repugnant, since like Celia in *The Cocktail Party* he has chosen the *counsels* of perfection, and these are notoriously likely to be mistaken by the world for priggish indifference. Lucasta who, with B.

Kaghan and the Mulhammers, Sr., is the unconscious Christian of the *precepts*, dimly understands that Colby's detachment is not indifference, but a passionate commitment to a reality of which she has only an inkling. But in him the "passion" of his commitment transfigures the world's "desire", and his possession of spiritual gifts is meant to mark him out for the "clerisy" of the Christian society. All this, so far as I can judge, utterly fails to redeem him as a character; to the very end, he remains priggish, cold, impotent, drifting his way into one renunciation after another. Eliot's problem is perhaps a difficult one; I can see that it is not easy to create a character who must stand for the incipiently perfect Christian life. But his solution is the worse for being predictable; it is just because the positive Christian in Colby has been negatively defined as the denial of the world, that Colby is interesting neither as a Christian nor a man. All that his Christianity comes to is renunciation of worldly love, father and vocation, and I submit that mere renunciation is inadequate by *any* Christian standard as a definition of the positive Christian life. Theatrically, he is simply impossible; at least I fail to see how any possible audience can bring much sympathy or even belief to a character who is, as a Christian, a blueprint, and as a man, a cipher. And of course Colby's loss is the world's gain.

Throughout the play, it is this doctrine of negative transcendence, steadily denying dignity or reality to the illusions of the world which the play is intended to transfigure, that impoverishes its human characters and makes their conversion a hollow ritual. That doctrine has also corrupted the language which might have helped to redeem it. But because poetry in the play is restricted to the incarnation of the religious real, the world and its illusions are forced to get along on Mr. Eliot's subtle but humdrum business verse. There are strategies here too. For a long time now, Eliot has wanted a naïve audience whose responses to his drama would be free from any taint of prestige-motives, an audience not striking the false attitudes which Mr. Eliot's verse or any verse earns in the theater today. And so we have the spectacle of a great poet with the gift of tongues systematically and humbly stripping away his *glossolalia* in the pursuit of a fresh audience, the condition of music and the service of the Christian Church. What emerges is a starkness, not the starkness of a late Beethoven quartet, but the starkness that comes when you deprive the world of everything that might make the Incarnation dramatic. In both poetry and action, the Word is here unfleshed. Mr. Eliot is certainly a great poet; he may, or may not, have a vocation to be a second-rate dramatist. Certainly the play he intended is, as intention, still viable, but his strategies and his own peculiar version of Christianity have as yet prevented the flowering of his true gifts on the stage.

Vigorous and lusty, a kind of massive rutting masque for the listening ear, Dylan Thomas' last work is a whole rich world away from Eliot's leached play. Originally commissioned by the BBC, it has since been produced on the stage with evident success. But plotless, undramatic in structure and without

developed characters, *Under Milk Wood* is less a verse-play than a ribald sacramental eclogue, meant to be heard in order to be seen. As achievement, whatever its genre, it seems to me a minor masterpiece: masterly, by virtue of the sheer range and power of Thomas' verbal skills, his astounding ability to make his words mean, and then to outsoar that meaning with emotional life; minor, in the truncation of vision that comes because the poet's very vitality has forced him to focus his vision along the line of his skills, taking intensity from restriction. But as an auditory achievement, *Under Milk Wood* is Thomas at his best: the richness sustained throughout, movement untroubled by over-inflection of symbols or sound, deft in pace-changing, redeeming prose with poetry, punctuating lyric, a whole repertory of ruddy sound supporting, justifying and out-suggesting the sense.

The place is Llareggub, a Welsh village under Milk Wood, by the wash of the Towy; the time is one day, from dark to dark. Through the voices of narrators, including a prosy Baedeker travelogue, via vivid counterpointing, Thomas takes us from one character to the next—from the poisonous Pughs to leching Organ Morgan (who should be compared with Eliot's musical eunuch) to Polly Garter mourning little Willie Wee—weaving their lives with the place and its dead, and patterning the whole in celebration of a text read in the crystal-ball of bigamous Dai Bread's No. 2 gypsy wife: *God is love*. Then the ball clouds over, refusing the future, but the text recurs as a *leit-motiv* announced by the high, drawn-out notes of a violin ("Isn't life a terrible thing, thank God?") or of children's voices ("It is Spring in Llareggub in the sun in my old age, and this is the Chosen Land"). The whole play is intended, like Thomas' *Collected Poems*, as a ritual celebration in "the love of Man and in praise of God", and attempts, like the Eliot play, an Incarnation in which the immediate physical world is transfigured. But whereas Eliot transfigures the world by nearly annihilating it and comes upon the real by stripping away the actual, Thomas' transfiguration comes in the intensification of the world, blessed at the very moment when poetry achieves a world's transfiguration. And, where in Eliot "love" supervenes in the loss of the world, in Thomas it comes as the fullest possible exercise of one's god-given nature in the world. Thomas' religion must seem either blasphemous or frivolous to the orthodox, but I suspect that it is less a flirtation with religious terms than a fertility-variant of Christianity, the underground Christian inheritance from the older pagan mysteries. Where Eliot is ascetic, Thomas is Eleusinian. Both are honest, both partial.

The attempted transfiguration should be readily apparent. Llareggub itself is "Eden" or "the Chosen Land", "this place of love"; a "God-built Garden to Mary Ann the Sailors who knows there is Heaven on Earth and the chosen people of his kind fire". Over Milk Wood floats "the music of the spheres", and "down the aisles of the organ-playing wood", "a greenleaved sermon on the innocence of men", lies "the wantoning ignorant chapel of bridesbeds"; in

the "Sunday meadow", the donkeys "drowse angelically". "With his little apple", Nogood Boyo tempts Lily Smalls to the wash-house, and poor Polly Garter, tugged by Mr. Waldo in the woods, becomes "Saint Polly Garter, martyred again last night". The terms of transfiguration are typically Eden, and the terms of salvation are almost always those of sexual love, promiscuous yet innocent.

It was Aristotle who remarked that "the only place for obscenity is in a temple", and he was referring to the standard pattern of initiation in the fertility-cults, where the law of the goddess was the law of fertility, the passionate use of one's nature. It is in this sense that Thomas' play is essentially religious, that all his characters capable of religious reality celebrate the sexual romp on Donkey Common, from Captain Cat, still anchored in Rosie Probert, to Nogood Boyo in the wash-house. Less real, the "bad" characters of the play, are those who, like the Danaids in the ancient mysteries, commit the crime against life and their own natures: the poisonous Pughs, Mrs. Ogmores-Pritchard fighting the dust at "Seaview", and the till-ringing, sexless drygoods-love of Mog Edwards and Myfanwy Price. In fact, outside of their sexuality and their passionate use of themselves, the characters have no defining traits whatsoever, nor are meant to have. They are merely different specifications of the God that in Thomas forces all creatures to celebrate their lives in Him.

However large the formal differences between the two works, *Under Milk Wood* illuminates the failure of *The Confidential Clerk*. Not merely because Thomas' skills are exactly adequate to what he celebrates, while Eliot's doctrines and strategy have made a desolation and called it the world. Nor, again, because Thomas' vision is larger or more "poetic" than Eliot's. Both visions are partial, both opposed, and both have been the subject of great poetry in the hands of their respective poets. The difference lies, I think, in the fact that Thomas has taken the full risk of everything he had—his convictions, his skills and his faith—and put them passionately to work; it was in the use of what he had that there was hope of enlarging the vision. Eliot, on the other hand, has also taken risks, but primarily the risks of time and judgment: it was a risk, for instance, that his analysis of contemporary Christianity and the possibilities of a verse-drama might turn out to be wrong (as I think they have). But his risks as a poet and a Christian have been risks of judgment, not of faith. It is, after all, in the name of shrewd strategy that he has compromised both his Christianity and his poetry, all under the impression that there was no risk he had not taken. And yet, whatever may be the risks of writing Christian New Comedy, the one risk that his last play does not take is the one risk which might have redeemed it. I mean the risk of saying what you mean with all the gifts you have for saying it. That means the dramatic creation of the Christian life itself, not the Christian life as a mere negative inversion of the world. It also means poetry.

C. ROLAND WAGNER

The Poetry of Unbelief

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF CONRAD AIKEN. Oxford. \$10.50.

CONRAD AIKEN HAS ALWAYS AIMED TO BE the representative contemporary poet. I think he has succeeded. He has not been a typical poet; he has not been a widely and carefully read poet; he has not even been a poet sufficiently understood by his strongest advocates. But for forty years he has been dwelling at the center of the consciousness of the twentieth century without relinquishing his ideal of universality and his devotion to work. Because of the task he set himself, Aiken is one for whom it is not improper to ask the question: is this a major poet?

The task was three-fold: to be the philosophical poet that Santayana, Aiken's teacher, anticipated at the end of *Three Philosophical Poets*; the "bard of psychoanalysis" that Freud might have hoped for; and the composer of an architectural poetic music after the English Romantic tradition in poetry. One substantial consciousness was to speak as three persons, intimately related: three persons were to express a single poetic reality. Thus any one aspect of Aiken's poetry leads to the other two. If we start with his early response to imagism, for example, we end with an abundant and complex creation. His sensibility was much taken by the colorism of John Gould Fletcher and the richness of some of the other imagists. When he called Fletcher a "possessed artist" he was not condemning him but sympathizing with the unconscious origins of his art; yet Aiken's intelligence wanted the greater achievement of the "possessor" artist, the artist who interprets and consciously transforms the sources of his inspiration. Now the paradox is that the imagists thought of themselves as supremely *conscious* poets, consciously excluding "unpoetic" ideas and theories. But Aiken knew that this really expressed a hidden fear of the unconscious. He knew that you have to explore the depths of the unconscious with all the resources of the mind in order to be a truly conscious poet. So he took what the imagists had to offer, a kind of visual "absolute music", an interest in imagery apart from meaning, and found a conscious poetic equivalent in his own aural architectural music—an equivalent that would convert the image into a symbol, that would not merely suggest but would indeed *represent* the flow of the unconscious background of life. Musical structure in the poem is like the rhythmic "transparent monotony" which Ruskin found in the Gothic cathedral. Auditory images (as Schopenhauer said, and T. S. Eliot after him) seem to be a more direct expression of the unconscious than visual images. They evoke the vague penumbra surrounding consciousness, an inhuman, infinite

landscape receding gradually from the bright human center. Thus the music arouses a feeling and at the same time illustrates a theory about the nature of mental life. It leads to Aiken's use of psychoanalysis (and its attendant philosophy) to help him stretch the limited poetry of immediacy into the more majestic poetry of ultimacy.

Aiken's poetry emerges at the uncertain boundary between consciousness and the unconscious. If the same can be said about much other poetry in all times, it is nevertheless true that Aiken is supremely aware of the fact and his awareness is stamped on everything he has written. His subject matter is the war between consciousness and the unconscious, the interweavings between mind and its sources, light and darkness, life and death—and together with this the poet's terrible and complete understanding of his own self-involvement. When R. P. Blackmur, therefore, remarks with some justification that Aiken's "poetry is not animated by an idea; it is obsessed by the need of feeling", it must be said in amplification that the "need of feeling" is itself an idea for Aiken which animates his poetry. He does not define ideas directly as the philosophical poet might be expected to, but his ideas about feelings, about how feelings are defined by poetry, in short about the whole nature and structure of the human mind, indirectly inspire his work and determine its quality and scope.

Aiken accepts the Freudian theory of art without equivocation: art is a mode of compensation for deficiencies and an escape from the world of truth. However much it takes account of the real world its ultimate end is liberation from reality. Criticism, in its turn, must be essentially psychological, for aesthetic objectivity is an impossible, even a perverse ideal; aesthetics is really a branch of morals. The viewpoint is not a popular one today. There is perhaps a fear of falling into the Marxist oversimplifications of the thirties. At any rate, despite the recent moral leavening in the new criticism, the great majority of modern writers of both the left and the right have not had Aiken's courage to affirm nakedly that "literary" judgments are at bottom moral, psychological and political—that art itself is essentially a subjective criticism of life.

But to what does the theory lead? What happens to Aiken's art, which he believes to be largely a superior form of wish-fulfillment? To answer the question we must first understand what happens to an *artist* who recognizes his art as a neurotic illusion. According to Aiken, such a man is always at war with himself. He is constantly asking: why not give up the whole enterprise as a bad job? Why act out the neurosis and continue to ridicule oneself? And, with William Demarest, the artist-hero of Aiken's novel *The Blue Voyage*, he is constantly answering:

... though I'm an unsuccessful artist—pleasing practically nobody but myself,—and though, as a good psychologist, I scorn or at any rate *see through* the whole bloody business, nevertheless I have that particular

sort of neurosis, verbal in its outward expression, which will probably keep me an artist till I die or go mad. . . . Suppose I'm a sort of fore-runner, a new type. . .

More deeply considered, the conflict is one between activity and passivity, in Aiken's case a conflict between art and love. On the one hand, "hypocrisy", a failure to face the truth, a desire for sublimation. On the other, "immersion", a need to be drowned in love, a desire for mystic union with nature. But who can say which is active and which is passive? In the extreme both are really the same: one, a remolding of life "nearer the child's desire"—a living death; the other, a childish search for God in the womb of love—a dying life. It is the old romantic problem with a new twist.

The new twist is Aiken's theoretically clear distinction between art and life. The romantics generally confused the two. They looked for life's salvation at the top of art and aesthetic order at the bottom of life. They were still religious. Aiken knows that art is illusion and life is chaos. He has a classically clear view of romantic aberrations and distortions. His philosophy is deep and wide enough to give rise to great poetry. He might have been a major poet in the great tradition since his talent is enormous. But in the final analysis I do not believe that his talent is fully realized, for notwithstanding Aiken's unceasing struggle for the comprehensive vision in his many long poems, his true successes are fragmentary. The elements of greatness are not bound together by an assured emotional unity. The reason may be that although he has intellectually discarded the romantic confusion between art and life, he has not discarded the emotional basis for that confusion. He has not discarded the expectation of getting more from art than it can give. Aiken still expects salvation from art and wishes art were not an illusion. Whether he still expects or hopes for ultimate meaning in life one cannot say; it is perhaps a natural inference but falls outside the scope of verifiable criticism.

I can agree, then, that Allen Tate's criticism of Aiken's work, written over twenty years ago, is still a just estimate, but I do not think it is justly based. It is true, as Mr. Tate suggests, that Aiken fails to achieve an artistically unified vision in his poetry, and even—though here there have been exceptions since the time Mr. Tate wrote—that "Aiken's intellectual formulas . . . do not permit him to make any artistically unifying statements . . . about his disorder". But it is not true that a "psychological theory of disunity makes this inevitable". There is nothing wrong with Aiken's psychological theory. There is nothing wrong with believing that the endless warfare between consciousness and the unconscious is a fact of the human mind. What is wrong is the way Aiken holds that theory. Intellectually he knows that there will always be wars and rumors of wars in this life, but emotionally he still hopes for final peace. Intellectually he knows that poetry can only resolve the conflicts of life ideally, not literally, that the peace of poetry is a peace not of this world, a hint of what it

might feel like if our problems were resolved. But emotionally he is dissatisfied with such a disillusioned view and hopes for literal salvation in poetry, for one last chance at heavenly glory in this world. The conflict prevents the poetry from resolving the problems of life even ideally. Almost in spite of himself, Aiken's emotional expectations make him dissatisfied with the limits of his craft. He would like it to do something which he knows it cannot do. Anticipating more from poetry than it can give, he gets much less.

The failure is apparent in most of the long poems. As Mr. Tate says, the struggle there between the ideas of consciousness and the music of the unconscious is unceasing. It is never resolved in a higher poetic unity. Instead, if it ceases at all, it tends to resolve itself in a lower *non*-poetic unity; it tends to dissipate into the chaos of the unconscious. The collapse is inevitable because Aiken must have final unity somewhere, somehow, whatever the cost; and since he cannot believe in such a unity rationally, in terms of the limited discipline of art, he is driven to find it in the irrational, below art. He reaches for the transcendent peace of Heaven and falls back into the immanent peace of the womb. The vague musical background engulfs the definite feelings and clear ideas and lulls the reader into an indiscriminating and dreamy passivity. Poems such as "The Pilgrimage of Festus" and "Changing Mind", which are supposedly ordered by the strictness of symphonic structure, are actually held together by no more than the specious unity of consciousness. And after consciousness fails, as it must without belief in one's craft, unconsciousness takes over. Aiken himself falls victim to the war between order and chaos, to the very dilemma that he has been meditating. It is impossible, of course, to illustrate the failure in particular passages since the cumulative effect of a long poem is the real test of its worth. But the *source* of the failure can be illustrated when the underlying lack of belief in art, which infects much of Aiken's poetry, occasionally erupts in an extreme moment of irony and self-criticism. At the end of "Punch: the Immortal Liar", for example, the irony is suddenly made explicit when the apparently human characters of the story are finally seen to be what they essentially are: puppets contrived by Mountebank, the narrator, and completely dependent on his arbitrary fancy. But Mountebank himself is in the same predicament, for he is created by those wanton gods of Heaven who kill men for their sport—and I suppose they in turn are created by other playful gods in further heavens beyond our knowing.

*He saw himself—though a god,—the puppet of gods;
Revolving in antics the dream of a greater dreamer;
Flung up from a sea of chaos one futile instant,
To look on a welter of water whirling with crimson;
And then, in an instant, drawn back once more into chaos.*

But, again, it is not the theory that causes the failure. It is the ever-present

implication in embodiments of the theory that the vocation of embodying it is a hoax. To adapt a phrase of Santayana's, for Aiken poetry is the religion in which he does not believe.

But I think Aiken knows this too. He knows his own weaknesses thoroughly and is not afraid to give himself away. Not that he believes his poems are failures: he believes that they successfully dramatize his weaknesses and make him a true mirror of modern man. He *is* a true mirror, but a successful poet only in his shorter pieces. In the *Preludes for Memnon*, particularly, most of Aiken's qualities are seen at their best. The emphasis is less on underground music and indefinite outlines and more on transparent ideas and noble gestures. The flow of music has not disappeared; it has been channelled and limited. These fragments of consciousness awaken us to the profound and the beautiful in the world, and they do it with a sad and delicate piety toward things exactly as they are:

*I heard him die: I knew that he had died.
And instantly I stooped and touched the grass,
Tenderly, yet with hands self-conscious too,
And with one finger touched the daisy, moved
Its frightened face against a chickweed leaf.*

Humane dignity and directness exist in the long poems too but are there overwhelmed by larger philosophical ambitions. The music of a single idea sustains Aiken for a half dozen stanzas or so, but after a while there is only the music; and music without an idea is a music that cannot even begin to be heard. Not that Aiken is essentially a poet of the brief, memorable quotation. There is a certain looseness and intentional carelessness in his work, and even in the shorter *Preludes* it is usually unsatisfactory to quote a few lines out of context. But the long-breathed repetitions and rhythmic alterations held over a page or two sometimes thicken and grow to vital climaxes:

*Go back again, and find the divine dark;
Seal up your eyes once more, and be as tombs;
See that yourselves shall be as Memnon was.
Then, if you have the strength to curse the darkness,
And praise a world of light, remember Memnon—
Stone feet in sand, stone eye, stone heart, stone lips,
Who sang the day before the daybreak came.*

Moments of greatness transport us now and then in a poet who is himself not great. I am reminded of William Faulkner's memory of Sherwood Anderson. Faulkner tells us that although the man who inspired him deeply as a youth was no "giant", he now sees that Anderson did make several of the "gestures commensurate with giance". And although Conrad Aiken failed to become the

kind of philosophical poet that his old teacher looked for, I have been told that the end of "Prelude LII" brought tears to Santayana's eyes a year or two before his death in Rome:

*Here is the evening paper at your door—
Here are your letters, I have brought your tickets,
The hour is early, and the speech is late.
Come, we are gods,—let us discourse as gods;
And weigh the grain of sand with Socrates;
Before we fall to kissing, and to bed.*

JOSEPH BENNETT

Recent Verse¹

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT KARL SHAPIRO, in the sequence, *Adam and Eve*, which opens his collection of poems, has some extremely important writing.

The sequence begins with "The Sickness of Adam", in which the newborn man awakens to the potentialities of his condition. The style is heavy, accurate, and poised with the Biblical weight. The ponderous rhymes proceed definitely and slowly, their decision and roundness culminating in the lines:

*He said also, 'I made you strike the sheep.'
It began to rain and God sat down beside
The sinking man. When he was fast asleep
He wet his right hand deep in Adam's side

And drew the graceful rib out of his breast.
Far off, the latent streams began to flow
And birds flew out of Paradise to nest
On earth. Sadly the angel watched them go.*

If one says 'it is as if the poem had always been', one expresses romantically a sense of the timelessness and ordered progression of these lines. Unfortunately, separate quotation does not give an impression of the force that cumulates behind them from the earlier parts.

¹POEMS 1940-1953, by Karl Shapiro. Random House. \$3.00. THE WAKING, Poems 1933-1953, by Theodore Roethke. Doubleday. \$3.00. UNDERCLIFF, Poems 1946-1953, by Richard Eberhart. Oxford. \$4.00. THE GLASS OF PERSEUS, by Wesley Trimpi. Alan Swallow. \$2.00. RIVERSIDE POETRY, A Collection. Haddam House. \$1.50 A SUMMONING OF STONES, by Anthony Hecht. Macmillan. \$2.50.

"The Recognition of Eve", concerning Eve's birth, has a more intricate rhyme pattern, with enough weight to keep the metric hitting upon the elemental rudeness and sonorities of the subject matter. "The Kiss", somewhat lighter in emphasis, relies upon a simple, full-rhyme pattern.

The fourth poem, "The Tree of Guilt", has a looser movement, with the superb metric extended in a more flexible cast, and there is a slight intrusion of 'psychology', where before there had been only the factual statement of the myth. The events had come to pass, re-enacted before our eyes, on the actual plane of the myth. But now there is a sense of discriminating analysis hanging over the material:

*Why, on her way to the oracle of Love,
Did she not even glance up at the Tree
Of Life, that giant with the whitish cast
And glinting leaves and berries of dull gray,
As though covered with mold? But who would taste
The medicine of immortality,
And who would 'be as a God'? And in what way?*

'Psychology' comes to dominate the fifth poem, "The Confession", but this brief excursion into the modern mind is terminated by the force and virility of the final couplet.

"Shame" is more Alexandrian; the rugged strength of the Hebrew text seems to have evaporated, and we are lost in a long list of attributes in the third stanza. The *élan* returns in the final lines, in the true coin of his vision, which has a quality complete and sacerdotal in its rigour and lack of compromise.

"Exile", the last poem of the sequence, pauses for some rather muddled moralizing on the part of Adam, who steps from the pages of *Genesis* to deliver a sermon to a Niebuhr-conditioned audience. Otherwise it is a perfect, somber exercise with the heavy rhymes falling down the balanced stairs of man's descent:

*And watched them at the broken-open gate
Stare in the distance long and overlong,
And then, like peasants, pitiful and strong,
Take the first step toward earth and hesitate.*

A single man, an artist, makes in his utterance the collective fears and hopes of many generations speak. The conclusion:

*And when the two had gone
A slow half-dozen steps across the stone,
The angel came and stood among the shards

And called them, as though joyously, by name.
They turned in dark amazement and beheld*

*Eden ablaze with fires of red and gold,
The garden dressed for dying in cold flame. . .*

Collective utterance, in its heaviness and dexterity and perfect metric; it is also showy and beautiful, as if the race had found a final music, a final instrument.

I purposely do not quote the final line of the poem, which is set off by itself in a separate stanza. With this line, Mr. Shapiro throws a perspective on his material which is invalid and ill-proportioned; it is cheapening. "And it was autumn and the present world" returns us to a self-conscious modern personality and the beat of metropolis. But one line cannot destroy the illusion of a racial achievement. And this is just what Mr. Shapiro has accomplished; one man acting on a stage for thousands of others, and for other generations.

The offending line is an introduction and a fitting comment to the remainder of the book. Mr. Shapiro, down now from his platform of collective utterance, provides a distinctive pictorialization of modern life. The colors, the beat, the rhythm of metropolis come out strikingly and silkily. Smooth landscapes of metropolitan artifacts beguile the eye and ear. The moralizing that follows hard upon is not very convincing; a little shrill, as if Mr. Shapiro were fanning his arms in a dark closet. So much conviction, so much protest; and more than a little dull. For didactic purposes, Mr. Shapiro cannot compete with Delmore Schwartz, who has got the real thing, the real indignation at modern metropolitan life.

Of the other poems in his book, one notices "The Conscientious Objector", "Conscription Camp", and "D.C." They don't come up to the *Adam and Eve* sequence, to be sure, but they are very good poems in the average run of things. "The Conscientious Objector" provides a moral predicament which is far enough removed from the poet's circumstances to allow him to approach it objectively. It is clearly-seen; it has eloquence, detachment, and memorable lines. "Conscription Camp" and "D.C." share this quality, and run through distinguished language to a satisfactory finish without any lapse of poise.

Mr. Shapiro has got one of the great poems of our moment, I think, for all the little breaks in his confidence that the sequence reveals. His *Genesis* should be for him and can be for others a new vein, a new frame of mind, extraordinarily rich in poetic possibilities; and in impact upon our brutalized society. The terms of his sequence are terms that a barbaric society can understand, because they are fundamental and point to basic facts. The realities of history are one, and here we span five thousand years.

Theodore Roethke's volume shows grace and delicacy, and a capacity for apt moralism that Mr. Shapiro could envy. It is not until the later work that much of real distinction appears; the earlier groups contain material careless and negligible in effect. In Mr. Roethke's most successful poems, the quality

is daft and apt; surrealism and discontinuousness combine to provide a divisionist effect. Mr. Roethke's most individual work is in the *pointilliste* technique. Peculiar, self-assured and separatist, he moves over an extraordinarily small range. He purposely works outside the mainstream of English verse. If Mr. Shapiro's *Adam and Eve* sequence represents a tribal, collective utterance, then Mr. Roethke, as an eccentric, is at the opposite extreme.

His is an individualism operating in disregard of the canons of traditional verse. Genuine and central to his work, his eccentricity does not, like that of Pound, mask a scheme of traditional concepts with a disjointed, spectacular technique. Nor is it like that of Mallarmé, the surface effect of a deepening of the range and context of traditional verse. It is at the heart of Roethke's verse, eccentricity; the center from which the poems spring.

The technique often becomes coy, becomes merely playful and cute; the word-play too often saccharine and overwhelming. But in poems such as "Where Knock is Open Wide" and "Give Way, Ye Gates", we are aware that there is a new thing in English letters. Pure untethered originality, Roethke's work might well be summed up; in its most characteristic phase. Hence the occasionally stifling effect and the extremely small range. It is in lines like the following that the joy of his utterance has tangible value. He is the least impersonal of our poets:

*Good-by, good-by, old stones, the time-order is going,
I have married my hands to perpetual agitation,
I run, I run to the whistle of money.*

*Money money money
Water water water*

*How cool the grass is
Has the bird left?
The stalk still sways.
Has the worm a shadow?
What do the clouds say?*

*These sweeps of light undo me.
Look, look, the ditch is running white!
I've more veins than a tree!
Kiss me, ashes, I'm falling through a dark swirl.*

My reactions to Mr. Eberhart's book, *Undercliff*, must be mainly negative. I find an easy assonance that has a tendency to become over-emotional, a weakness for the pseudo-profound, a great deal of jangling on big words like God, Man, Time, Death, Life. What does one make of lines like the following?

*Poetry is so mad and so kind
It is so majestic an inventive surprise,
Is it any wonder that in it
The spirit of man arise?*

There is an interchangeable play upon important words, but without realization. One does not re-create the great themes by naming them, or by shouting at the top of one's lungs. A lack of decorum is the severe limiting factor to Eberhart's work, and a fluctuating sentimentality is his typical failing.

But he has come up with some good ones. "Sea Scape With Parable" is jolly and elegant, bouncy and joyous and worthwhile, with discernible Stevens in its texture. "The Verbalist of Summer" is successful, an assured projection of Stevens' excellences. Again following Stevens, "A Man of Sense" is probably his best poem, in its quietness and self-control. A handful of poems show that Eberhart is capable of first-rate work; that he has the potentiality of greatness. What then makes him so frequently irresponsible and childish?

Wesley Trimpi's volume makes a good start. One notices a carefully ordered, classical imagination in such poems as "Leda", "Phlegm", "Adirondacks" and "Piano". "The Growth of Perseus" shows a talent that may well become an important one if it can acquire more bulk, assimilate a further range of emotional reference, and extend itself in depth:

*Medusa sat alone,
The visible finality of sense:
Beyond her lay a wilderness of stone
As incorporeal as death in the haze
Of the desert heat. Perseus murdered her,
And knew he could not look beyond his glass:
Hard with intent, he watched the emerald beads
Plunge and lift in her deep fuliginous eyes.*

Mr. Trimpi shows promise; if he can overcome his stiffness and the slightly ossified effect, he can advance the art.

It seems proper to notice here a collection of verse by students in the metropolitan New York colleges, chosen under the title *Riverside Poetry* by W. H. Auden, Marianne Moore, and Karl Shapiro. This project has displayed some interesting talent. Doris Bailey's "Creation" has sureness and eloquence; Robert Hutchinson's "Leibniz" is intellectual and deft; Kenneth Koch, moving in a syncopated idiom in "Miss America", shows a talent that can move further if it will discipline itself. The project is an admirable one, and the judges and Messrs. Chamberlin and Hopper, who sponsored it, should be encouraged to make it an annual event.

Anthony Hecht's collection, *A Summoning of Stones*, is a first volume of sustained charm and elegance. Mr. Hecht's most individual style, a sort of reflective effervescence set in variable mood-keys, is seen to its best advantage in "La Condition Botanique":

*The Mexican flytrap, that can knit
Its quilled jaws pitilessly, and would hurt
A fly with pleasure, leading Riley's life in bed
Of peat moss and of chemicals, and is thoughtfully fed
Flies for the entrée, flies for the dessert,
Fruit flies for fruit, and all of it . . .*

A Baroque exuberance in the medium characterizes Hecht's poetry; the words whirl and perform their curves. The verbalism shows his confidence in his *métier*. In the poem cited above, in "Japan", "Divination by a Cat" and "The Gardens of the Villa d'Este", the poet is reminding us of something we have too long forgotten: that poetry is a profession, that one can rejoice in pure professionalism. An artist who has mastered the possibilities of his talent hopes to catch our attention, like Bernini, with grand curves and plungings and soarings. In the drabness of a self-conscious age, licking our wounds in corners, we have forgotten the plasticity of the High Baroque, the "abounding, glittering jet" of man rejoicing in his own condition, to the envy of the gods.

This sets the dominant tone, the individual note of Hecht's writing. He is a poet, for example, who is not afraid to produce a pure exercise, as in "The Place of Pain in the Universe", where all is craftsmanship held up for our admiration, and the subject merely a device, as in an étude of Chopin. Language is meant to be enjoyed. The "Songs for the Air" show the same quality, an astonishing virtuosity, as if the language were a thousand geni. Echoes of Stevens at the beginning of the poem give way to language considered purely for itself, as a Roman square is functional only in the sense that it attracts onlookers:

*Pinwheels and Ferris wheels of air revolved
To full orchestral pomp, air writhed like blood
In the eccentric bodies of French horns;
Even thus a comic majesty adorns
The Shade of Brandenburg, who rode or stood
On a huge carrousel, till it dissolved.*

In "A Poem for Julia" Hecht shows a propensity and a noble ability to discuss the various conditions and situations of man, shown in historical perspective; at the same time a tendency to draw a moral which seems an appendage to what had been some pretty live language.

I imagine the best poems are "At the Frick" and "Alceste". Here tough

subject-matter has given his exuberance and vitality considerable bite. "At the Frick" concerns St. Francis of Assisi:

*Birds in the trees his chronicle recite:
How that God made of him a living net
To catch all graces, yet to let through light.
Fisher of birds and lepers, lost in thought,
Darkly emblazoned, where the oblivious mule
Champs at the grasses and the sunset rusts
The hilltop fortress, where the painter set
Heron and rabbit, it was here he caught
Holiness that came swimming like a school
Of silver fishes to outflash his lusts.*

It is a fine performance; and throughout his book Hecht shows himself to be a poet of much talent and many possibilities.

R. W. B. LEWIS

Literature and Things

SYMBOLISM AND AMERICAN LITERATURE, by *Charles Feidelson, Jr.*
Chicago. \$6.50.

THE "AND" IN MR. FEIDELSON'S TITLE is important. He is not totting up particular symbols *in* American writing; he undertakes rather, and with considerable intellectual courage, to examine *both* symbolism (as a point of view, essentially modern) *and* mid-nineteenth century American literature, each in the special perspective of the other. Modern symbolistic literature may thus, in Mr. Feidelson's word, be "naturalized"; while our own leather-bound ancients may be dusted off by a fresh interpretation of them as creators of a symbolistic universe. Mr. Feidelson sets up no reductive equations; he explores possible affinities, tendencies and secret relations, all of which hint, finally, at some of the qualities and perplexities of the modern western mind in general. It is an inevitable book; it was altogether due to be written. For it charts with exhaustive precision the main directions taken by the discussion of literature over the past many decades: a mammoth enterprise which someone was bound to attempt. But there is nothing inevitable about the controlling strength of discourse, nor the continuing but unstrained good humor, which the book exhibits.

A book of this dimension raises only the most serious questions about itself.

It has something of the boldness of intention that marked F. O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance*, a work Mr. Feidelson calls "magnificent"; this new essay has a cooler magnificence of its own. Denser and more closely-reasoned than Matthiessen's study, but less large and generous and more single-minded, *Symbolism and American Literature* belongs in that small company of critical writings which have sought (successfully, *secundum quid*) to re-appraise the entire American literary tradition within the vocabulary most influential today. So the over-riding question it raises is exactly the fruitfulness of our current vocabulary—as reflecting our current commitments and expectancies, as representing our current habits of response. I hope the book will get very rapidly onto the shelf of anyone interested in these matters; and who is allowed not to be?

Mr. Feidelson follows a sort of spiralling procedure, making an honest account of his "argument" as delicate a job as he insists the analysis of a symbolist poem must be. A somewhat lengthy résumé is nonetheless necessary. The author begins by identifying Hawthorne, Whitman, Melville and Poe as "symbolists"; which, for the moment, seems to mean that all four shared a preoccupation with the nature of perception and, in quite varying degrees, a common fascination with the dramatic figure of the perceiver, or Man-seeing. Then, in an excellent chapter, Mr. Feidelson describes the "symbolistic imagination" as it has been defined, urged and illustrated by modern philosophers, writers and critics: by Whitehead, Cassirer and Susanne Langer; by Gide, Joyce and Wallace Stevens; by Kenneth Burke, R. P. Blackmur and Allen Tate; and by all their nephews, cousins and epigones. Here we enter the realm of metaphysics; for Mr. Feidelson is concerned with the aspirations about reality which have encouraged the symbolistic outlook; "the physics of symbolistic literature," he rightly declares, "depends on its metaphysics." The metaphysics in question is a view of the real—gotten at, somewhat furtively, by a reconsidered theory of knowledge—as organic, vital, continuous, functional, inter-active, eventful, adventurous: summarily, as a living fusion of those subjects and objects so long divorced in the Cartesian tradition. The knower, the known and the knowledge (according to the view) dance in consort; and the dance is reality. So to see it, anyhow, is to perceive symbolically. The melting-together occurs in works of literature, Mr. Feidelson tells us, when they are designed as linguistic constructs: that is, as independent creations, remote alike from the private personality of the artist and the hypothetical, imitable, external "world of pure objects". Such works are symbols, the very begetters of meaning; in the remark quoted from R. P. Blackmur, "words bring meaning to birth and themselves contained the meaning as an imminent possibility before the pangs of junction. . . . The reality you labour desperately or luckily to put into words . . . you will actually have found there."

Mr. Feidelson thereupon circles back to early seventeenth-century New

England to find in Puritanism both the crude impulse towards and the doctrinaire suppression of the symbolic habit of mind—the mixed background of a specifically American symbolism. The Puritans, he says, showed a natural tendency to look upon “human activity (as) symbolic drama. . . . The conflict of good and evil in New England was an epitome of the war of Heaven and Hell, not merely in the sense of representing it but as an organic part of it, a true synecdoche.” At the same time, however, the Puritan dedication to logical reasoning tended even more strongly to a distinction of things into separate, static entities, each with its single meaning: an anti-symbolic bias which led to a general distrust of the image-making faculty as blasphemous—“It is *God’s* prerogative to make *types*,” Samuel Mather dogmatized in urgent italics.¹ That inward contradiction would turn up again, dramatised, in the novels of Herman Melville; but for the time being rationalism of a blurred and discolored sort carried the day. Mr. Feidelson traces the decline of “the capacity for symbolic thinking” to the point of its complete disappearance in the dreary empirics of the Unitarians. But meanwhile, he remarks, there was the positive development of “a consciousness of method that freed the mind from dogma”: an interest in method that evolved into a love of inquiry itself; and the very act of “seeking” began to be self-rewarding. Thus the climate into which Emerson and his fellows were born, while it was “harsh,” was not entirely restrictive.

The final two chapters pick up the mid-nineteenth century writing with which the book began, examining some of it at greater depth with the sounding-instruments prepared in the meanwhile. The focus now is on Emerson, as representing “the upsurge of a new capacity” (for symbolic perception); and on Melville as representing “the relapse into doubt” (of that capacity). Out of the, for me, rather less interesting of Emerson’s vagrant musings—and with side-glances at Thoreau and Horace Bushnell, the talented and now forgotten Hartford theologian—Mr. Feidelson puts together a metaphysic of perception: a way of viewing the universe as a kind of poem, Emerson’s kind. That kind was an irregular ballad with an infinite number of stanzas, a gigantic flow of poetry in the writing of which man participated by the act of creative percep-

¹This chapter seems less determined than most of the others, through what I take to be a misplacement of emphasis in the discussion of the then fashionable Ramistic logic. If logic was honored and “rhetoric” held in low esteem among the Puritans, it was partly because the *substance* of rhetoric—the sources and devices of the traditional art of persuasion—had been absorbed, both by his predecessors and by Ramus himself, into the art of dialectic, where it continued to exert an honored force; while the *name* of rhetoric was reserved for what little remained, chiefly the use of ornamental figures. The requirements of aesthetic form were not abandoned either; they were simply transferred, like rhetoric, to the dialectical argument; and since the latter was regarded as a scientific investigation into the nature of reality, it might be inferred that reality had the same formal perfection demanded of the argument. The anti-scholastic dialecticians could never criticise Aristotle or Quintilian often and wrong-headedly enough for not observing, in their rhetorics, the principles of order and design laid down in the *Poetics*; the hit-or-miss quality of their enthymemes, it was suggested, would fatally obstruct a correct perception of the rounded outlines of things. Mr. Feidelson does not omit mention of these matters, but he leaves a somewhat misleading impression.

tion: just as, by the act of creative reading, a reader might contribute to the making of actual verse. But since experience, as Emerson meant it, was the true poem, the literal writing of poetry became paradoxically an inferior or an unnecessary business. Everything could be seen and named, new-named; Cartesian dualism with its pain and its problems dissolved under Emerson's assurance that everything was everything else and the all instantly visible in the each. Thus Mr. Feidelson uncovers in Emerson some not inexpert foreshadowings of the symbolism he has already sketched out for us as prevalent a century later.

But in the fiction of Melville, Mr. Feidelson sees a strenuous and growing doubt about those possibilities of insight and articulation that Emerson had taken for granted. The contest between ambition and doubt appears as the animating force in the Melvillian dramas; for Mr. Feidelson identifies all of Melville's major works as symbolic enactments of the symbolising process, or narrative tests of its efficacy; and he posits the continuing *agon* as that between the dedication to seeking and the thwarted lust for finding, between "the voyage as end and the voyage as means", between the Ishmael-type and the Ahab-type. The recurring effort of the hero (of Taji, Ahab, Pierre) to break through the masks is co-extensive with Melville's effort to write the book; and in *Pierre*, which is here analysed by comparison with Gide's *The Counterfeiters*, the two extensions merge in Melville's desperate endeavor to write a novel about Pierre's desperate endeavor to write a novel about a novelist.

It is a mark of the almost heroic stature of this work that every important question it provokes in us is eventually raised quite explicitly in the text itself; I am not sure but what Mr. Feidelson has not slyly "forced" many of these questions on us. But the principal or generic question is the one Mr. Feidelson formulates emphatically in his "Postscript": "In general, how can symbolism, having transcended the characteristic oppositions" (i.e., between the components of knowledge) "of the last few hundred years, come to grips with all the patent dualisms of life, which are given to reason and epitomized in rational method? In particular, how can a distinctively aesthetic approach, both in theory and in practice, render an adequate account of ethical fact?" If we add "whether" to "how", that is indeed the two-fold question which has been nagging the reader all along. Or this reader, anyhow.

Let me begin with the mild observation that one test of a critical instrument is whether, when applied to Melville, it gets its best results out of *Moby-Dick* or out of one of the lesser books. One has noticed those many discussions of Melville in recent years which (*mea culpa*, too, here and elsewhere) strike their largest sparks from *Mardi* or *Redburn* or, as here, *Pierre*, or *Billy Budd* or *Clarel*; while the average reader returns, in his unembarrassed wisdom, to *Moby-Dick*. But this leads to a more general query: whether American literature is not, by and large, too susceptible to the big idea? and whether the big idea

does not sometimes skirt those rare exceptions—like *Moby-Dick* and *Huckleberry Finn*—which are not so susceptible to it? I have the feeling that most American writings yield too easily to any major critical attack upon them; they can, as it were, be devoured at a gulp. By contrast, say, *The Charterhouse of Parma* or *Crime and Punishment* is splendidly indigestible; no critical scheme is comprehensive enough to get at more than a fraction of it; it contains too many “patent dualisms” and “ethical facts”. Our own better works fall like ten-pins before the well-directed shot; and this, I think, is due at least as much to the slender vitality of the works as to any hypothetic arrogance on the part of the critic (Mr. Feidelson is the opposite of arrogant). Listen to them fall as Mr. Feidelson develops his big idea: namely that symbolism is not merely their technique, it is their very subject, what they are about:

“Hawthorne’s subject”—in *The Scarlet Letter*—“is not only the meaning of adultery but also meaning in general”; *The Blithedale Romance* is “place(d) . . . in terms of aesthetic perception”; “the symbols,” in Whitman’s *Lilacs*, “behave like characters in a drama, the plot of which is the achievement of poetic utterance . . . the drama of the poem (is) a movement from possible to actual poetic speech”; “The subject of” *The Fall of the House of Usher* “is aesthetic sensibility”; “(Emerson’s) works are like a continuous monologue in which the genesis of symbolism is enacted over and over. . . . His main subject was the method he professed”; “Tom,” in Melville’s *Typee*, “is less a man than a capacity of perception”; in *Mardi*, “theme and method are one. . . . Taji’s career represents the symbolistic imagination; it is the symbol of symbolism”; “Just as the method of *Moby-Dick* is a paradox, the theme of the book is an unresolved question—doubly unresolved, since the question is precisely the validity of the method”; finally, “In the central work of Hawthorne, Whitman, Melville and Poe, symbolism is at once technique and theme. It is a governing principle: not a stylistic device, but a point of view; not a casual subject, but a pervasive presence in the intellectual landscape.”

One is grateful for the originality and acuteness of the judgments. But the same mode of analysis would produce comparable judgments about nearly every great work of literature; and no one would suppose that its sustaining reality had been thereby isolated. It would not be frivolous, for example, to describe the *Odyssey* as a poem about a great poet: Odysseus, like Huck Finn, is a master of narrative invention—it is his natural gift for story-telling which gets him out of his worst scrapes and gains him human and divine support; the *Odyssey*, let us say, is a poem in praise of poetic inspiration. The *Aeneid*, on the other hand, celebrates the agony of composition: the creation of the new Troy is an image of the creation of the new epic; both confront the *labor improbus* of informing a fundamentally intractable matter; out of one quarrel

came Rome, out of the other poetry. Shakespeare's heroes are not only accomplished poets, as Mark van Doren has pointed out; their concern is with poetic utterance and the telling of sad tales; their tragedy follows from a flaw of sensibility. *Tristram Shandy* is a sort of comedy of creativity; it is permeated with ironic reflections on how to write a book; and the novel races itself to see which will arrive at fulfillment first. And so on. I do not advance all those characterisations with equal solemnity; but I will stand by them, even while maintaining that the theme of creativity is in every case a mirroring of the other theme—ethical or political or social or imperial, or whatever; and not vice-versa. And if Mr. Feidelson is right in claiming creativity as the heart of significance in his American writing ("Melville's subject is creation"), then I can only suspect that they all of them suffer from a shortage of reality; they haven't enough stuff in them; and down they go.

Mr. Feidelson, who is alert to just about everything, is alert to the danger of such malnutrition: "In the degree that the poem shakes loose from the poet himself and from the world of objects . . . poetry will be deprived of material; in performing its function, it will destroy its subject-matter." But he is convinced that symbolist writing at its best, quite the contrary of being a self-diminishing loss of reality, is a sturdy effort to recompose reality. And even the danger, he argues, may be turned to account in the "problematical" work; work like Melville's, which got its very propelling energy out of a profound sense of the danger. In work of that kind, Mr. Feidelson concludes, the entire quotient of reality which earlier poets (those I mentioned above, for example) had rendered in ethical or religious terms is now engaged by the drama of aesthetic sensibility: the symbolist "reaches within his own frame of reference the same sense of the ineluctable tension of human life as others put in terms of the distance between man and the supernatural. His God is the present reality of his work. . . . His Devil is the potentiality of illusion," etc.

But the real difference between Mr. Feidelson's modern symbolists and those "others" who measure "the distance between man and the supernatural": the crucial difference, I believe, is between a devotion to the primacy of things, or existences, and a devotion to the primacy of thought, or perception. The representative motion of Emerson's generation was from one version of the former to one version of the latter: from a wretched version of the former—from a bleak theologism and a deadly empirical dualism—to a lively and promising version of the latter, to a fertile psychologism; the motion is traced very clearly in Perry Miller's anthology, *The Transcendentalists*. The writers of the time, whether they understood it or not, were caught up in that ever-recurring philosophical cycle which begins the moment things (or more simply, being) cease to be the first concern of the inquiring mind; when the question about what there is to know and to articulate is gotten at only via the prior question of how we know and articulate anything at all; when epistemology or psychology

takes over as first philosophy. Traditionally, the cycle does not work itself out until a dispute over the grounds of knowledge has led to an impatient skepticism about the possibility of any knowledge; and after skepticism has in turn been banished by the pragmatic conviction about the necessity of acting or doing. An ancient instance is the sequence from the Greek Stoics to Pyrrho to Cicero; a modern one from Locke to Hume to Kant. And one phase of Mr. Feidelson's story might be told in these terms: from Emerson's confident obsession with what he called "first philosophy, the philosophy of mind" to Melville's potent skepticism about the mind's capacity; with a later pragmatism awaiting its cue in the wings.

We have to deal here, of course, not so much with philosophers as with poets and novelists: persons who, if they do "turn inwards" and settle on a course of dramatising perception—of seeing themselves seeing, in the phrase of Holmes—almost never do so because a philosopher has told them it is time to; they do so out of many other compulsions. Nonetheless, as Mr. Feidelson himself asserts, behind the physics of composition lurks the metaphysics; and not every metaphysics is equally valuable for the creative imagination. Put it like this: *The Divine Comedy* and *Moby-Dick* are both symbolist poems and both are very great works of literature; but the former is greater because the poet's mind is engaged with things and is bounded and ordered by the symbolism of things; Dante stays with the doctrine of Aquinas that interpretations "are not multiplied because one word signifies several things, but because the thing signified by the words can be themselves types of other things." If *Moby-Dick* is relatively inferior, it is because the poet's mind is engaged with mind, and no mind of itself is controlled by anything; it breeds endless significations out of the words that arise in it; and the uncontrolled meaning of *Moby-Dick*, its infinite and contradictory suggestiveness, is a kind of magnificent defect. There is a sense, perhaps only Pickwickian, in which anxious old Samuel Mather was quite right: "It is *God's* prerogative to make *types*."